

ABSTRACT

DISCOVERING BEST PRACTICES OF CONTEXTUAL DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM LEADING TO CHURCH GROWTH OF MULTI-SITE CHURCHES: IMPLEMENTING BEST PRACTICES OF CONTEXTUAL DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM FOR WIN CHURCHES IN THE PHILIPPINES

by

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Contextual discipleship and multisite church growth have been the most common method for developing churches in the Philippines. These methods have shown a consistent church growth pattern and are adaptable to changes and situations. Word International Ministries comprises small to medium-sized churches in the Philippines and other regions of the world. This church longs to thrive in contextual discipleship that would later lead to a healthy growth in more locations around the globe where the gospel has not yet reached. With the aid of discovering the phenomenon of contextual discipleship and multisite church growth in some medium to large-sized Evangelical churches in the Philippines and some parts of Canada, this discovery will provide ideas and innovations for the WIN churches to thrive in their mission and ministry in their contexts.

This research project aims to discover the best practices of some of the Evangelical churches in the Philippines and some parts of Canada for implementing a contextual discipleship program that leads to multisite church growth. The data for this project was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions of five multisite churches and three single-site churches. The participants were lead pastors of discipleship and church planting in their respective churches.

The major findings of this study include having a clear and simple church DNA, small group discipleship as the primary focus for spiritual development, the contribution of preaching to the faith development, relationship-based assimilation, intentional community engagement, intentional leadership development, and an organized system of leadership and financial management. The implications of these discovered ideas and innovations resulted in an improved church discipleship approach, a more intentional method of reaching out to the unchurched, and improved leadership development.

Key terms: Discipleship, multisite, small group, preaching, and leadership.

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IMPLEMENTING BEST PRACTICES OF CONTEXTUAL DISCIPLESHIP
PROGRAM FOR WIN CHURCHES IN THE PHILIPPINES.

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by

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Chapter One provides the framework for discovering best practices in implementing contextual discipleship that moved churches from single to multi-site. The researcher offers a rationale for the project, supported by personal experience research. Themes for and significant contributors to the literature review are identified as well as the contextual factors of the ministry setting. Chapter One includes the purpose statement, research questions for the project, research and participant descriptions, and data collection and analysis methods. The researcher concludes with a preview of the entire project by chapter.

Personal Introduction

I am a home-grown pastor in our local church of Word International Ministries in Taytay, a first-class municipality in the province of Rizal, Philippines. I started serving the church in 2008, and now I am about to transition to a more extensive responsibility that entails managing the local church. My ministry context has been through a lot of ups and downs. We were once a megachurch from 1981 to 1996 when we were still under Word for the World Christian Fellowship, a member of the Church of God denomination. By the time our church had been an independent denomination recognized by the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC) on July 9, 2003, we had navigated many challenges. These challenges helped us grow towards maturity as the members developed Christlike character.

Our church has used many discipleship models in the past to contribute to its spiritual and physical growth. Our church borrowed these discipleship models from churches that have thrived well. Some were from other countries, and some were from our nation. I find it alarming to know that in all of the models we've tried in our church, we just used it for a few months to a year then we lose momentum. We have tried every type of model that would fit our context, but no significant change has happened. The church had a hard time being consistent in implementing each discipleship method. So there has been no uniform strategy of discipleship that would guide each church in every ministry and mission it may involve.

In 2017, the church developed a common discipleship strategy implemented in 200 churches in 25 countries. The discipleship process originated from Word International Ministries church in Singapore. It is simple and easy to learn by every person. It is also biblical, principle-based, and practically applied in any context. Since it is a strategic process, it still needs many fill-ins to make it usable and perform well in the church. A curriculum that is contextualized and can fit in the culture of our church is necessary.

Word International Ministries forms churches by building outreaches to adjacent cities or towns. These outreaches program themselves through a church planting strategy. It starts with opening bible studies and fellowship groups. Then it propagates well until an outreach can launch its Sunday service. Ministries are established, and potential leaders are identified and equipped through exposure and other discipleship means. The outreach pastor can develop leaders. A home-grown associate pastor, a finance team with a financial system, and the concrete plan to continue to share the Gospel in many

unreached areas of the city. The three-S strategy for planting a local church is self-governing, self-sufficient, and self-propagating. The outreach will be ready to become a local church if these three are met.

Our local church in Word International Ministries Taytay had set a vision of “Going beyond borders.” Our goal is now to develop that passion in intentionally reaching the lost. We aim to make disciples of Jesus with rigorous passion in every corner of society at every level. Given the new discipleship process, we have difficulty implementing the strategy and adapting it to our church. The new design was hard to fit to our culture and context. I’m not saying the whole of it, but maybe part of it cannot be adapted well in our context, like the methodology designed for a group of people of a higher classification. Our church leaders learned that we need to re-organize and adjust ministry practice.

Our local church membership is currently around 150 to 200 attendees at a medium-sized level. It is composed of many ministry departments with an extensive leadership pool. The youth and the young adults are active and growing, which gave us a glimpse of hope for the church’s future. We have a Church Council that represents our board of trustees. There is also a distinguished group we call the Community of Disciples, composed of leaders of the ministries and pastors. The Church Council and the Community of Disciples are the primary decision-makers of the church. WIN groups are our in-house branding for our discipleship groups. Our outreach had an inactive church planting ministry that has remained stagnant for many years. But despite that, we had developed an outreach strategy through our social media platforms where the gospel and our weekly live streaming services are held.

In our present status, we continue to develop leaders. But the weak point I see is in outreach and intentional disciple-making by the members. There is a lack of a lively and active disciple-making culture in our church. I pray for such things to be cultivated someday. I long to see every church member doing their part in the Great Commission wherever they are situated and as God has uniquely called them. For me, God provides the church's growth, but the church has a role to play for His purpose to be fulfilled. God rewards fruitfulness, and more responsibilities are given to those who have been faithful to the small things. So it is my most profound burden to guide our church in fulfilling the Great Commission. I know that it will not happen in an instant. But I know our church will be active in disciple-making as the Holy Spirit inspires us to obey God's Word.

Because of this burden, I want to explore the best discipleship practices from other churches in our context that have thrived well and consistently made disciples. Through that exploration, I could get many ideas on how to plan for the discipleship process in my church context that would guide us to move into a multisite church.

Statement of the Problem

Word International Ministries Taytay church has the vision to enlarge its discipleship ministry to fulfill the Great Commission. The desire to activate the church planting ministry is a tool for a fruitful outreach ministry. However, the church's discipleship process needs to be improved first and adapted by the members before going into an outreach ministry.

The multi-site model, commonly called megachurch, has been used in the Philippines. Their practice of discipleship and church planting has been the key to their growth. There are about fourteen or more churches that are megachurch in its category.

These churches have multi-site local churches in the country and across the globe. While the phenomenal growth of megachurches has been evident, they have been influential to the single-site churches that try to learn and apply the strategies that the multisite churches have done. Some churches have just stayed content with their status quo. A few understood the proper practice in implementing discipleship in each context. Thus, there is a need to discover the best practices of contextual discipleship that lead to growth in the multisite churches so that the single-site church can learn and apply them in their local church context.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to discover best practices in implementing contextual discipleship that moved churches from a single-site church to multi-site churches with pastors and church planters from thriving Evangelical churches in the Philippines and Canada.

Research Questions

The following questions will guide the research and learning for discovering best practices in implementing contextual discipleship that moved single-site churches to multi-site churches:

Research Question #1

What are the experiences of pastors in having contextual discipleship and multi-site strategy in their churches?

Research Question #2

What is the context or situation of the churches involved that have typically influenced their experiences of contextual discipleship and multi-site strategy that leads to church growth?

Research Question #3

What are the best practices of the churches regarding contextual discipleship that lead to a multi-site church?

Rationale of the Project

The primary reason for doing this project is the motivation to obey the Great Commission mandate of Christ to his disciples in Matthew 28.18-20. All churches established by God have a general purpose of making disciples of all nations. The call to discipleship should be its top priority wherever a local church is situated or whatever status it faces. God warns churches who stay stagnant or lukewarm in their calling, just like the Laodicean church in Revelation 3.14-22. A church must consistently do its part for the Kingdom by learning to adapt to a fast-paced society. The church's consistent service and adaptability are a commitment for a lifetime. So, the church should not stop obeying Christ's mandate until the coming of the Lord.

In Matthew 9.35-38, Jesus was moved with compassion when he saw the people who were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd to guide them. Jesus told his disciples that the harvest was still tremendous, but more laborers were needed in the Kingdom. This project will remind all churches to have the same compassion as Jesus for the lost. Most churches are inwardly focused. They are busy developing ministries, teachings, fellowships, and resolving conflicts. Some churches have no or lack funding to

do outreach ministries and church planting projects. There is a lack of focus on the primary purpose. The church should have a heart like Jesus towards the lost. If that is the main agenda of every church, there will be a large enough passionate workforce for the harvesting of souls.

There is a common trait of single-site churches today: spiritual congestion (Rainer and Geiger 138). There is no spiritual movement among members who are uninvolved in the Great Commission. Transformation is not evident in their lives. Change starts in every individual member as God works within their lives. The church's leadership is responsible for nurturing every member by teaching them to obey everything God has commanded them to do. The leadership of every church is to promote spiritual movement and prevent stagnation. So, it is a challenge for small and medium-sized churches to pursue spiritual transformation within the body, and this can also be a motivating factor for every multisite church.

Currently, our church has a goal to venture into new outreach opportunities. The church should strategize this goal with a stable and precise discipleship process. The discipleship process must be calibrated by biblical principles while being culturally sensitive and contextually appropriate for the people in our church. Discovering the best practices of multisite churches will help guide how our church does ministry so that we can be the salt and light of the world.

Definition of Key Terms

The following key terms for this project are defined as follows:

Contextual Discipleship: Making disciples fits well with the current culture the church is trying to engage, the leadership team is trying to implement, and the people who will execute it (Murrell, 157).

Multisite Church: One church gathering in multiple locations, including campuses, different cities, and regions. This model shares a common vision, leadership, budget, and teams (Surratt et al., 18).

Delimitations

The researcher consolidated information from two sampling groups. The necessary knowledge from these samples comprises the church growth challenges and implementation of the discipleship process. One group represented single-site evangelical churches, and the other came from multisite churches. Both groups were situated in the Philippines and other parts of Canada and limited to 5 churches each. Each church was represented by a senior pastor, a discipleship pastor, or a church planter who will underwent the interview process. The local church where I work was excluded from the research to avoid any biased data that might influence the outcome.

Review of Relevant Literature

This research project has drawn resources from literature discussing the effective discipleship process and church growth. One notable author I chose to explore is Steve Murrell in his two books *WikiChurch* and *The Multiplication Challenge* because of his stories and principles in founding one of the multisite churches in the Philippines, Victory Christian Fellowship. I have discovered the various challenges and successes in how they implement discipleship and made it their core strategy in reaching out to the campuses

and other mission fields. It is good that these resources are closely related to the context of my local church.

Other notable authors like Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger, who wrote *Simple Church*, contributed to the simplicity of the disciple-making processes. I understood that there is a way that the discipleship process will be more effective and efficient if it is done simply and clearly so that a layperson in the church can apply it. The church should develop its discipleship process in this way. So, I explored more about this literature to establish the foundation in discipleship and church growth principles.

One very notable author for me is Rick Warren and his book *Purpose Driven Church*. His approach in this book derives from a purposeful and biblical way of church discipleship and growth. The model of discipleship is Christological. A seeker-sensitive and missional approach is practically emphasized to attain church growth. Saddleback Church has been a suitable model for growing small groups and campuses.

Regarding the multisite church model, the literature written by Geoff Surrat et al. entitled *The Multi-site Church Revolution* and *A Multi-site Church Roadtrip* have been valuable sources for learning how to establish multi-site church models.

Research Methodology

This project used a qualitative phenomenological research method to discover the best practices made by the Evangelical churches in the Philippines and other Word International Ministries churches in Canada. These Evangelical churches have transitioned well from a single-site church to multisite churches. This project has relied on descriptive questionnaires, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and focus group discussion with two groups of evangelical churches from the single site and multisite

arenas. The researcher formally requested artifacts such as vision and mission statements, and discipleship processes. The multisite churches had a regular attendance of five hundred when they had moved from a single site to multisite. A questionnaire was sent to a pastor or church planter of a multisite church involved in transitioning to multisite. Another set of questionnaires was sent to a single-site church's senior pastor or church planter. The interviews were conducted with both groups on different schedules and platforms. The researcher evaluated the responses, interviews, and artifacts to discover the best practices of the multisite churches and the challenges faced by single-site churches.

Type of Research

The type of research in this project is pre-intervention because of the discovery of best practices that can be adapted by any single site church like my local church has a vision of transitioning to be a multisite church. This project was based on qualitative phenomenological research which involved interviews with eight Evangelical churches and Word International Ministries churches from single-site and multisite arenas. Phenomenological research is a design of inquiry in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by the participants (Creswell 57). The researcher's type of phenomenological research was transcendental phenomenology. This type focuses more on describing the participants' experiences (Creswell 59). The multisite church is a phenomenon that every church needs to explore and gather ideas from to improve church growth. Specifically, the study focused on the experiences of the pastors and church planters as their church transitioned to being a

multisite church. The research tools used were a descriptive questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and specific artifacts that would give valuable data for the project.

Participants

Participants for this research were the pastors of each church coming from three (3) single-site churches: WIN Bacolod, WIN Pasig, and WIN Alabang. In addition, this researcher interviewed pastors from five (5) multisite churches: Victory Church Ortigas, Christ's Commission Fellowship Angono, New Life Main, Word International Ministries Ontario, and Word International Vancouver. The churches were chosen because of their length of tenure being multi-site churches. Each church has recorded a total of five hundred or more attendees during its transition from a single site to a multisite church.

Instrumentation

The instruments used in this research are descriptive questionnaires, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions of the single site to multisite church transition, discipleship process, and vision and mission statements of the churches.

Data Collection

The questionnaires were sent through Facebook messenger and email. The researcher sent an email of the letter of invitation to participate in the research addressed to the church's senior pastor. Then the researcher scheduled a one-on-one interview with each participant. The interview was either through an online video call or a face-to-face meet-up. A focus group was also formed for single site churches respectively. That focus group was held on the Zoom application which also recorded the conversation and transcribed it.

Data was collected from the participants who have experienced the phenomenal transition to being a multisite church. The participants were asked two general questions: “What are the experiences of pastor/s in having contextual discipleship and multi-site church strategy?” and “What is the context or situation of the churches involved that have typically influenced their experiences of contextual discipleship and multi-site church strategy that leads to church growth?”. A third question was about the best practices in implementing discipleship and multi-site church strategies. Other open-ended descriptive questions were also asked for in-depth information on the experience.

Data Analysis

Upon receiving all responses, the written interviews, and the artifacts, the researcher transcribed the interviews and identified themes from the transcript. Each theme was organized into categories for analysis. Transcendental phenomenological analysis was the method of analysis used to interpret the research results. The following steps have been applied to this analytical process (Smith et al. 118):

- a. Reading and re-reading all the data collected. This step involves immersing self in some of the original data.
- b. Initial noting and commentary of the researcher on the collected data. This step examines semantic content and language use on a very exploratory level (Smith et al. 119).

- c. Establish any descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments from the data.

Descriptive comments focus on explaining the subject’s content within the transcript, linguistic comments concentrate on exploring the participant’s

language, and conceptual comments focus on in-depth interrogation and conceptual level (Smith et al. 120).

- d. Develop emergent themes. The researcher has recognized interrelationships, connections, and patterns between exploratory notes (Smith et al. 129).
- e. Search for any connections across emergent themes. The researcher will start charting the notes and distinguish the pieces that fit together. He can use contextualization to identify the contextual or narrative elements (Smith et al. 136).
- f. Looking for patterns across cases. Make clusters of themes for the group to show how themes are interconnected (Smith et al. 140).
- g. Make a composite description of all the significant themes and summarize.

Generalizability

This project is dedicated to discovering the best practices of contextualized discipleship in a multisite church. The information gathered here can benefit any single site church that wants to thrive in its ministry for the kingdom of God. This project can be used by any church in the Philippines and Asia, where the culture is quite similar. This project is significant because it will help single-site churches plan for church growth efficiently and practically.

Project Overview

The next chapter talks about the related literature that describes the biblical and theological principles of discipleship, principles of church growth, and the multisite church. Chapter 3 presents the specific methods of how this research project was done.

Chapter 4 analyzes the responses, transcribed interviews, and relevant artifacts. Lastly, Chapter 5 discusses and synthesizes all research findings and its interpretation.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter provides an extensive review of literature that is relevant to this research. First, I establish the biblical and theological foundations of discipleship and church growth. Second, I examine systems of discipleship leading to church growth. The third part of this literature review focuses on the multi-site model with its methodology, comparison with the church planting model, the recorded best practices of multi-site in various churches, and its challenges and pitfalls. The final part of this chapter talks about how this review contributes to the research, and the summary contains a synthesis of the themes and terms to be used in the study.

Biblical and Theological Foundations of Contextual Discipleship and Church Growth

Church growth is the result of an effective discipleship strategy. There are biblical passages that support the concept of contextual discipleship and church growth. The New Testament shows significant evidence of discipleship and church growth, and many churches use these passages to motivate their congregations in making disciples and growing in quality and quantity.

To start with, I examine the teachings of Jesus about discipleship. Jesus is the founder and head of the church. From his life as recorded in the Gospels, believers can acquire the proper framework or blueprint in making disciples and building our churches.

On being a true disciple of Jesus

A beginning place for the concept of discipleship and church growth is the Greek word *mathētēs*, which means a disciple or pupil (Kittel et al. 494). The command ‘make disciples’ in the Great Commission is the Greek verb *mathēteuō* (Kittel et al. 492). A *mathētēs* is a person who directs his mind to something; one who engages in learning. A *mathētēs* is a person who learns from another by instruction, whether formal or informal (Louw & Nida 27.16). The Greek philosopher Socrates did not use the title *mathētēs* for his followers to avoid incorrect association with the Sophist, who was inclined to rhetoric that contains subjective truth (Green et al. 317). *mathētēs* is morphologically related to the Greek verb *manthanein*, “to learn,” which also means to adhere to a great teacher. Jesus’s call for his *mathētēs* exhibits a unique and radical way of learning from Him and following Him in every life situation. Jesus’s initiative to call His disciples is a radical move compared to traditional rabbinic practice, where the disciple’s responsibility was to find his teacher (Kittel et al. 499). The disciples intentionally demanded the prerequisite of paying the cost and commitment to the cause (Green et al. 319). One can learn from the ways of Jesus in how he called His disciples. Jesus’s call was a combined invitation and challenge to a whole life transformation that would affect other people’s lives.

The marks of being a *mathētēs* of Jesus are faith and obedience. Jesus desires His disciples to put their faith in Him more than the gifts he presents and the cause he represents. The *mathētai* of Jesus obey Him because He is the Messiah. Whereas the rabbinic students will one day become rabbis themselves, the disciples of Jesus will remain to be his followers who will abide in His words in a way He wanted them to live (Kittel et al. 500). The faith and obedience of a disciple signify their love for God in response to the grace they have received from Jesus. Faith and obedience are the central

characteristics of a disciple, and these are developed through an ongoing process of gradual understanding, repentance, and change in perception of life.

Another identifying mark of a true disciple of Jesus is love for each other. The disciples' love for each other shows they no longer belong to the world. The love for others shows their belief and commitment to Jesus (Green et al. 332). Love is the sign of the *mathētēs* to the world (Kittel et al. 501). In John 13.34–35, Jesus gave a new command to his disciples that they should love one another. By this, they can prove to the world that they are His true disciples. All disciples should manifest that love as an expression of their faith (Gal. 5.6). And the source of this love came from the heart and deity of Jesus. He is love, and those who love one another are born of Him. Love for one another expresses acceptance, correction, discipline, and guidance toward a disciple. Every disciple should be considerate and pursue to edify one another in their spiritual walk with God. Each should be like-minded, having the same love, valuing others above themselves, and looking to the interests of others (Phil. 2.2–4).

Counting the cost of following Jesus is also an essential mark of a true disciple. Each disciple is called to express their allegiance toward Jesus by counting every cost they need to make (Green et al. 333). The first disciples who were called left everything to follow Jesus. The disciples followed Jesus as He went to many places to proclaim the good news. That is the cost they needed to pay, and they found worth in it except for one person, Judas. Counting the cost demonstrates faith and surrender to the lordship of Jesus. Putting anything to a lesser priority can hinder the Great Commission. —career, property, family, or any other temporary thing.

There are two ways of counting the cost of discipleship taught by Jesus to his disciples in Luke 14.26–27. One is self-denial, and the other is bearing one's cross. Self-denial, or in Greek, *aparnéomai*, implies that a disciple must deny himself in a radical renunciation, accept the cross, and find true life in Christ (Kittel et al. 72). A disciple should deny anything that gives him pleasure, comfort, ambition, and temporary success because these things will provide no eternal value. The other cost is bearing the cross. To bear, or the Greek verb *bastázō*, is an external carrying of the cross that symbolizes discipleship (Kittel et al. 92). Bearing one's cross means taking on the sufferings of a faithful follower of Christ. A disciple should be expectant of the suffering they will encounter and take that as an opportunity to grow in spiritual maturity. A disciple should plan how they will handle their life as they follow Jesus. This longtime suffering will result in total dependence on God and effectiveness in ministering to others.

All of these qualities are to be cultivated in every disciple of Jesus. These qualities can be achieved through intentional discipleship. The focus of each disciplinemaker is the transformation of each person from the inside and out. It should never be on numbers but genuine care for the disciple's spiritual growth. This kind of discipleship is what the Lord Jesus acknowledges.

The Two “Greatest” Passages for Discipleship and Church Growth

Matthew includes two “greatest” passages in his gospel. The two “greatest” passages lay the foundation of all the teachings of Jesus. The apostles also carried these on from the start of the early church. The first passage is the Greatest (Matt. 22.36–40). In verse 36, the lawyer asked Jesus which is the greatest commandment. The word used for ‘great’ here is the Greek adjective *megale*, which pertains to being great in terms of

status or, in short, important (Louw and Nida 915). Jesus responds to the lawyer's test, saying, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." The word for love here, *agapaó*, means to have loved someone or something based on sincere appreciation and high regard (Louw and Nida 374). The first commandment first appears in Deut. 6.5, where the Lord instructed Israel to keep this command in their hearts. The first commandment concerns the important vertical relationship of the people to God. Blomberg refers to using three human faculties as the totality of one's being wholeheartedly devoted to God (335). According to D.A. Carson, the three human faculties are not mutually exclusive but overlapping categories that demand our love for God from the whole person (Carson 464). The primary purpose of disciples of Jesus is to love God with their whole lives. The purpose of loving God is the foundation of spiritual growth and everything they do in the kingdom.

Jesus does not stop with one commandment. He continues, "And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 26:39). The second commandment is a citation of Leviticus 19.18, and it has equal importance to the first one. The original word for neighbor is the Hebrew noun *rea'*, meaning friend, companion, or another person (Harris, *TWOT*). The Greek word used in the Septuagint for neighbor is *plésion*, which stands for fellow people. This person lives close to others in the group they identify with both ethnically and culturally (Louw and Nida 180). Turner describes this second greatest law as a striking echo of the demand for love in the first command (536). The loving relationship cultivated in God will also be shown or shared with their neighbor. If a disciple fails to love the neighbor as themselves, they have also failed to apply the first great

commandment. Just as the central processing unit (CPU) is the central processor that executes instructions to a computer, the Greatest Commandment is the CPU of the Christian life. This command dictates what believers do for God and others. Ignorance of this commandment will tear down everything. Every disciple should live according to the great commandment and replicate that lifestyle to others to form the DNA of a church.

In the Greatest Commandment passage, Larry Sherman discerns the quantitative and qualitative concepts of church growth and discipleship. He states that the second commandment, to *love thy neighbor*, is a quantitative growth component regardless of whether it is a believer or a non-believer (Sherman 25). This second commandment compliments the Great Commission, which is outreach oriented. The concept of love for the neighbor pertains to the qualitative component of church growth and discipleship. Being a true disciple sent out to the world should be motivated and established by the love of Jesus. This commandment's qualitative and quantitative components go hand in hand for every disciple who will faithfully apply these to their spiritual walk.

The second great passage is the "The Great Commission." In Matthew 28.18–20, Jesus mandates every disciple to go to all people and make disciples. The Greek word for authority, *exousia*, is defined as one who has authority to rule or govern, an authority or ruler (Louw and Nida 599). The authority of Jesus in the heavens and the earth echoes what is written in Daniel 7.14, that His kingship is eternal and indestructible (France 960). Blomberg connects this authority to Jesus's exaltation, showing that all people will bow down and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (431). This authority empowers all disciples of Jesus who will carry on the commission to the world. Christ's promise of his

abiding, divine presence with His disciples until the end gives hope and encouragement to fulfill this mandate.

The phrase *all the nations* in verse 19 denotes the scope of target that the Gospel of the kingdom should reach (France 961). Jesus gave a clear objective to His disciples, and this one is too big to be accomplished by only a few individuals. Jesus needs more disciples from every generation and place to go where each has been called to fulfill the mission. The Lord of the harvest needs more laborers to do the work for His kingdom.

The main imperative in this statement is “make disciples,” not “go.” This imperative is followed by two compound verbs, “baptizing” and “teaching,” which comprise the process of making disciples (France 962). According to Carson, to make disciples of Jesus is to establish that person in a relationship with Him. As a student to a teacher, one takes his yoke of authoritative instruction, accepts all His words are true, and submits to the requirements of being His disciple (Carson 595). “Respectable teachers usually waited for disciples to choose them; only the most radical sages were reputed to choose their disciples” (Keener, *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* 9347). The radical approach of Jesus in calling his disciples shows his foreknowledge of the people who will be part of building His church. Jesus invites His disciples to follow Him every step of the way and leave everything behind.

The main imperative verb *mathēteusate* in the Great Commission is translated “make disciples.” The task of making disciples entails proclaiming the message of the gospel among people who have not yet received the forgiveness of their sins (Green et al. 335). Making disciples implies the call to follow Jesus and the process of becoming a follower of Jesus. The participles “baptizing” (*baptizontes*) and “teaching” (*didaskontes*)

define the formation of the new disciple as they grow in discipleship (Green et al. 336). When a person decides to be a disciple of Jesus, they should undergo baptism to identify with the death and resurrection of Jesus in his life (Rom. 6.1–7). They must also be taught to obey every commandment of Jesus and apply them in their life. These actions must be done intentionally to every disciple so there will be a genuine transformation and fruitfulness in every area of life. The Great Commission should be initiated by going to the lost people and meeting them where they are. Without the imperative ‘*go*,’ there is no movement or action from the disciples who carries out the Great Commission. Jesus promised his presence to every disciple until his return. Jesus will be present in the life of every disciple as they grow and serve Him in His kingdom.

Baptism is the first initiation of new disciples to the family of God (Turner 690). It is a declaration of a new identity. Baptism is an enrollment to the school of the Kingdom where the disciple or “pupil” continues to learn until they reach maturity. Jesus did not only instruct disciples to teach everything; he commanded them. Jesus instructed them to teach new disciples to obey everything He commanded (Geiger et al. 28). Every disciple experiences a spiritual transformation when they, His teachings. So, the church must teach them to obey everything taught by Jesus. The outcome of a true disciple of Jesus is not knowledge but faithful obedience to His word. Life transformation from old to new manifests an obedient disciple of Jesus. Jesus commanded these actions in this commission for the church to accomplish until he returns in the future. He expects no complacency from anyone in this important mandate.

The closing statement of the Great Commission provides the church’s future hope. As long as believers pursue and fulfill His purpose, He will never leave or forsake

them. His presence will be with them until the very end of the age. These two great passages lay the foundation of discipleship and the church's growth. If Christians don't acknowledge and understand these two great passages, then they will miss the primary purpose of ministry. Work for the kingdom will be senseless or lacking direction if the church is not founded upon these commandments.

Therefore, these two great passages should be the main priority in discipleship and building the church for God. These two great passages complement each other. Both contribute to the building up of His Kingdom. When believers base their ministry philosophy of making disciples and church growth on these two passages, it will significantly impact the world.

Jesus's Teachings on Discipleship and Spiritual Growth

Discipleship is deeply embedded in the heart of Jesus. Discipleship has been one of his top priorities since he started his earthly ministry more than 2000 years ago. When He was about to ascend back to heaven, he entrusted the task of discipleship to the apostles. In the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13.18–23), there are four kinds of people who received the word of God. Turner described the first three soils, from the seed snatched before it shoots the withered sprouts to the choked plants, representing more growth, but none of them produces any fruit (Turner 341). If the church did both discipleship and church growth excellently, fruitfulness would result from the word being planted in the hearts of receptive and obedient people.

The good soil is the kind of perspective every disciple of Jesus should inherit. It shows that understanding is not interpreted as purely intellectual; instead, it is because of the lifestyle of faithfulness and commitment to His word (France 485). There is evidence

of fruitfulness that replicates from the disciple to other disciples. Turner described the good soil as one which signifies genuine discipleship: obedience to all of Jesus's teachings. The Greek word for 'understand' (Matt. 13.19, 23) here is *sunēmi* which means to employ one's capacity for understanding and thus to arrive at insight (Louw and Nida 480). The Greek words used for 'understand' in verses 19 and 23 are in present the active participle form, which means that the person who follows Jesus must continue to walk with the proper insight, comprehension, perception, and perspective. The things that choke and take away the word from people's hearts are the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and a lack of spiritual roots or foundation that led to stumbling when pressure and persecution come. These things are not aligned from the perspective of the good soil, which should be laid aside for the disciple to produce a bountiful harvest crop. A fruitless disciple is of no use in His kingdom.

In Luke 9.23–26, Jesus explained to his disciples how they should follow him. There is a total denial of self when one disciple wants to follow Jesus. The original word for 'deny' in verse 23 is the Greek verb *aparneomai*. It is defined as disregard, paying no attention, or refusing to give thought to following Christ (Louw and Nida 451). Jesus required every disciple to deny themselves. They need to deny everything that satisfies them and even their reputation. By the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, one can achieve denial of any selfish motive, desire, and ambition as he continues to follow Jesus.

Another significant phrase in this passage is "take up your cross" (*airo ton stavron*), an idiomatic expression defined as being prepared to endure severe suffering, even to death (Louw and Nida 366). Green explains that the message of Jesus to His

disciples warns them to prepare for a lifetime of discipleship with suffering. Suffering is a daily refusal to engage in the worldly system. (Green 428) The life of a disciple of Jesus will face a lot of troubles in this world, and one should be prepared to face it and not give up their faith until He returns. His promise to those who will be faithful until the end is His presence and hope for the future. So, in teaching disciples, one of the core traits that needs to be taught is living a life of self-denial and the willingness to bear the suffering of Christ.

Another important teaching of Jesus on discipleship is the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25.14–30). The talent described in this parable represents the specific privileges and opportunities of the kingdom and the responsibilities it involves (France 832). Jesus entrusts to his disciples the duty of faithful disciple-making until He returned. He expects the disciples to multiply each talent, gift, and responsibility. If anyone does not reproduce the responsibility, regardless of how big or small it is, that person cannot enjoy the Master's happiness. In discipleship, multiplication should result from every work performed in His kingdom. Believers must live out the principle of the Parable of the Talents in fulfilling our mandate (Roberts 54). Every disciple should have an end in mind that whatever God has entrusted him will replicate.

In doing discipleship in the church, believers should always lay their foundations on the teachings of Jesus. These are the universal principles that guide decisions in living as faithful followers of Jesus. As Christians encounter challenges along the way, they must embrace these teachings and trust Him to the end. Joy and reward await believers in heaven when they faithfully obey these precepts in their lives.

Biblical Principles of Church Growth

A. Servant leadership is the heart of every builder of the church. (1 Cor. 3.5)

One clear concept of church growth in the New Testament is in 1 Corinthians 3.5–15. In this passage, Paul addresses some concerns of divisions in the church. Paul uses *servants* as typical imagery to address himself and his coworkers like Apollos (Fee 130). The word *diakonos* is defined as a person who renders service (Louw and Nida 579). Paul imitates the servanthood of Jesus. One way of reminding believers to lead the flock of Jesus is to act as servants to them. The scripture shows this role is a privilege given by God which allows His Son's sovereignty to reign over His church. This perspective of servanthood changes the way believers minister to people. As the church grows and multiplies, a servant of God does not take any credit for it because they know God made it happen.

B. All the credit belongs to God, who causes church growth. (1 Cor. 3.6–8)

There are three contributors to the good health of the church. The first is the church planter, which is Paul. He initiated the evangelization and planting of the church in Corinth. The second one was Apollos, who watered the seed of the gospel. Apollos was an Alexandrian Jew equipped in Priscilla and Aquila's Christian doctrine. He was educated and well-versed with the OT scriptures (Vermillion 376). He equipped the Corinthian church with spiritual maturity. The ultimate contributor to the good health of the church was God. Craig Keener emphasizes that God should be the main focus of the growth, not the individual ministers (Keener, *1-2 Corinthians* 42). David Garland describes the source of success of the servants came from God alone (220). He is the only one who caused the growth of the church. The Greek verb *auxanō* means to cause

something to increase (Louw and Nida 751). Neither Paul nor Apollos should take that credit because both just served their purpose for the body of Christ. God transforms the lives of every part of the body of Christ. God draws people to His church and builds them. Those who minister to the brethren are all equal and will be rewarded someday by God according to their contributions to the body.

- C. A builder of the church should carefully lay its foundation on Jesus alone. (1 Cor. 3.10–11)

Paul described himself as a skilled master builder. His specialty was designing and laying the foundations of the spiritual life of every follower of Christ. The word *sofos architekton* is a wise or a master builder (Louw and Nida 653). He knows by experience that every church builder should be wise in building it. One should be able to lay only one firm foundation in the church: Jesus Christ. According to Gordon Fee, the foundation that should be laid in the church is not proper doctrine but the gospel itself with its basic content of salvation through Jesus Christ (139). The servant's main objective is to establish Christlikeness to every disciple in the church. Jesus is the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2.20) and will never be replaced. Not even the servant himself should replace Jesus as the solid foundation of the church.

- D. A builder of the church ensures quality service until the coming of Jesus. (1 Cor. 3.12–15)

Paul's last principle in 1 Cor. 3.12 is applying the best quality material when building the church. Someday the quality of the materials will be tested through the fire, and they should survive. There are many interpretations of the meaning of these metaphors. One said that gold, silver, and precious stones represent a dedicated, spiritual service to build the church. Wood, hay, and straw are inferior materials that present a

shallow service with no eternal value (MacArthur 1570). Fee says that the good quality materials are compatible with the foundation, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the weak materials are the ones that will perish in the end (140). I prefer the second interpretation because it connects to the main theme of Paul being a skilled master builder. The phrase “It will be revealed” in verse 13 is one Greek word, the verb *apokaluptetai*, which means to cause something to be fully known (Louw and Nida 431). On that Day (God’s Day of judgment after Christ’s Second Coming), all services for the gospel will be tested for their quality. It will be revealed through fire. Ministers must ensure that the quality of discipleship they offer everyone is highly valued, equivalent to gold, silver, and precious stones. This requirement of quality disciple-making challenges all ministers who take part in building God’s kingdom. A minister must ensure that the true gospel has been shared, his disciples have been equipped, and his disciples are empowered to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Biblical examples of Church Growth in the book of Acts

There are two accounts of growth in the early church in Acts. The first account is in Acts 2.36–47. This account happened on the day of the Pentecost when the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They began to speak in different tongues sharing the good news with all the people in Jerusalem. After Peter preached the gospel to the people, they were cut to the heart and convicted of their sins. Peter challenged the people to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. Those who did received the Holy Spirit. Three thousand souls were added to the number of disciples that day.

Verses 42 to 47 show the church’s early life and how they started nurturing each other’s faith in the Lord. Darrell Bock describes these events as a community’s life

involving four key areas: apostolic teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread together, and prayer (297). Peter Wagner describes the birth of the early church as healthy growth that combines both quantitative and qualitative (121). Both authors detail the natural outcome of the early church's birth, a pattern followed by many healthy and growing churches today. Besides the initial addition of three thousand believers, the church grew more while doing the four areas of community life. Luke mentions in verse 47 that the Lord added to their number every day those who were being saved. The Greek verb *prosetithei*, an imperfect active indicative form (added, 2.47), means that the Lord continually adds something to an existing quantity (Louw and Nida 753). Luke gave full credit to the Lord as the early church's growth source. The apostles were the servants that the Lord used to propagate the Gospel during that time.

The second account of church growth can be found in Acts 6.1–7. In the passage there is an issue regarding the daily distribution of food that was not given fairly to the Hellenistic widows. The apostles assigned seven reputable men to handle the issue, full of the Spirit and wisdom. The apostles wisely made the delegation of the task to concentrate on prayer and preaching the word of God. The act of appointing and anointing seven men paved the way for increasing the number of disciples, as stated in verse 7. The Greek verb *plēthunō* means growing significantly in number or extent and multiplying (Louw and Nida 752). This word was used both in verses 1 and 7. Peter Wagner shares that Luke used this word to describe the increasing growth of the church, and he regularly reports this in the book of Acts (193). The word *auxanō* (6.7, increase [ESV], spread [NIV, NKJV]) refers to the successfully spreading of the word of God due to the effect of delegating administrative tasks to other servant leaders. The apostles

could focus on preaching, and, as a result, the disciples (*eplēthyneto*) multiplied (Bock 489). When the church administration is handled well and tasks are properly delegated, discipleship will be purposeful and effective. Concerned brethren appropriately addressed the issues that usually cripple the church. So as a minister, it is wise to delegate tasks to other leaders who are more capable of handling the problem to focus on our role as intercessors and preachers.

Although only two specific accounts have shown evidence of church growth, both numerical and spiritual, in the book of Acts, these served as enough basis for the positive effect of the Gospel preached, and they are supported by contextual discipleship. The church growth principle, planting, watering, and growing, was evident in the early church's life. Many churches have adopted these ministry practices and grown tremendously because their response to the Gospel affected the world.

Models of Discipleship Processes Leading to Church Growth

Megachurches and multisite churches have been successful because of the effective implementation of discipleship processes contextualized to their congregations. According to Hartford Institute for Religion Research, the term megachurch generally refers to any Protestant Christian congregation with a sustained average weekly attendance of 2000 persons or more in its worship services, counting all adults and children at all its worship locations (Megachurch Definition). These churches intentionally guide every disciple of Jesus through stages of spiritual development and deploy them to be active in the Great Commission. Church growth always starts with properly executing the discipleship process by establishing good biblical foundations for every disciple, equipping them for excellent service, and empowering them to lead others

for Jesus. This section will discover churches that model the discipleship process that led them to explosive growth quantitatively and qualitatively.

The Simple Church

The Simple church is a concept developed by Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger. They describe it as a congregation designed around a straightforward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth (Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church* 60). They formed the system through four main stages: clarity, movement, alignment, and focus. Clarity is the way the discipleship process was communicated clearly to the leadership team and then to the congregation until everyone reached a unified understanding of it (71). Defining a discipleship process should be clear enough not to cause any confusion to the people. Making the process too complicated or full of terminologies becomes challenging to remember and understand.

The stage of the movement is the steps in the discipleship process that cause people to move to higher areas of spiritual commitment to the Lord (72). The effective assimilation of a seeker of the Lord is focused on every area of commitment, not programs. The goal is the spiritual maturation of the person as one goes higher in every commitment. The role of church leaders is not to transform people. That is the role of God. Our part is to place people in the process of God's transforming power (Geiger et al. 82). There should be movement of people to achieve spiritual maturity and transformation, and clear transitions guide this. The church will be vibrant if there is a continuous movement of people through the process.

The alignment stage is described as the orientation of various ministries around the simple discipleship process (Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church* 75). All ministries

involved in the simple church should align their programs and activities to support the simple discipleship process. Any program that is not connected or cannot contribute to the process will not be included. This uniform approach promotes unity in the church that moves in one direction. One of the reasons for the disintegration is that the church is not organized and discipleship-oriented at its foundation. The church's ministry structure needs to be established in discipleship that builds up and enables spiritual growth in the congregation (Mamo 153). So, every ministry in the Simple church must be aligned to the simple discipleship process.

The last one is the focus stage. This stage is the commitment to leave everything that falls outside the simple discipleship process (Rainer and Geiger 77). As the simple church adapts to the simple discipleship process, each ministry should commit to staying focused on its development to allow a continuous movement of people. The senior pastor and the leadership team will consistently model and implement the simple discipleship process. Anything that disrupts or differs from the discipleship process should be disregarded. By doing this focus, a simple church will be able to exhibit a disciple-making culture. It will become the DNA of the church (Mamo 157). The simple church promotes and applies accountability from every church leader. This model will create the tradition of discipleship in the church. There is the full cooperation of the church body. The simple church is an ideal model of creating a sustainable and intentional discipleship system.

The Sticky Church

Larry Osborne, the lead pastor of North Coast Church in northern San Diego County, shares the model of the sticky church. North Coast Church is one of the US's

most influential and innovative churches. Sticky churches are deemed healthy because they aim to attract seekers, lead them to Christ, and help them grow to maturity (Osborne 13). Larry Osborne's team has focused their energy and innovations on making their church welcoming and sticky to all assimilated people. They learned how to protect the back door of the church. They've been intentional to the point that the back door has been on the constant radar of the leadership team. Their goal is not to increase church attendance but to maintain an average of 80% of the congregation being taken care of in a small group (21). This intentionality drove many people to stick to the church via small groups. They all sensed being welcomed as part of a family and cared for in their spiritual walk.

The evangelistic strategy is what they call "come-and-see" evangelism. This strategy happens when a person has a spiritual need or interest; the church responds by inviting them to a Bible study, attend a church service, or have fellowship with other Christian members (32). This approach is less intimidating and threatening to anyone and gives freedom to observe and experience God in the church. There is no pressure imposed on the person. They just allow the Holy Spirit to move in the life of that seeker person. The follow-up of the seekers attending the service is done by the Christian friend who invited them. Since evangelism and follow-up were naturally done, the assimilation of the seeker naturally commits to Jesus through the Sticky church. All these happen naturally because of word-of-mouth by the people that naturally drove new attendees to know Jesus and the church.

As people are assimilated into the Sticky church, Larry Osborne introduces the type of small group that would allow people to stick to the church. He termed it *Velcro-*

ed growth. This type of small group is a sermon-based group where the last weekend's sermon is the topic discussed in every small group. The goal of a sermon-based small group is for Velcro people to know the word of God and the need to grow spiritually as Christian (43). This small group strategy designed by the Sticky church promotes God's way of transforming people by His word. When the word of God is digested fully by every person who attend the weekend service and is being challenged throughout the week, there is a transformational impact in that person's life. Eric Geiger states that the transformation of a person happens by the truth of God. He writes:

The truth of God is undefiled and unchangeable, and God has chosen to use His truth to bring transformation to His people. By His truth, we were saved, and by His truth, we are made holy and walk in freedom. Quite simply, transformation does not occur apart from the truth of God. (Geiger et al. 92)

I am convinced that a sermon-based small group is an effective tool for transformational discipleship. The small group model guarantees that the Bible is close to the heart of everyone who hears and does His word. This also ensures sharing of insights and experiences from all the small group members. That can reinforce the revelation of the word in the hearts of everyone who belongs to that small group. The sermon-based small groups increase the attentiveness and note-taking of every person (Osborne 61). Every small group member is more attentive during the weekend sermon and diligently takes notes because they know that they should be able to share their insights when they meet their respective small groups during the week.

Jim Egli and Wei Wang researched the factors within small groups and their churches that contribute to small group growth. Out of 1,140 small group leaders who

came from 47 different churches in the US, the result of the 85-question survey regarding small group growth says:

1. Leaders who take time to pray for their small group will see more people come to Christ.
2. Caring relationships show a casual relationship with the number of new group members.
3. The small group has an outreach focus.
4. Empowering leadership positively impacts small group growth. (Egli and Wang 144–45).

According to the research, there is no correlation between small group leaders' amount of time in preparation for their group lessons and other group outcomes. Many churches focus a lot of their time and effort on how to prepare for teaching a lesson or leading a Bible discussion (149). These results simply show that the time spent by the small group leader in praying, giving pastoral care to his group, focusing on outreach, and empowering the group members will lead to effective growth. A sermon-based small group method will require less time to prepare for small group lessons because the preacher has already arranged the topic for the week. And the word of God will be processed more practically by the group. As a result, each small group leader can focus more on the small group's spiritual growth.

The sermon-based small group approach contributes to the vision and mission of the church. Whatever the direction of the leadership team has been rallying to the church, through the sermon-based system, they can promote a churchwide focus (Osborne 62). The leadership team can guide the teaching team to develop a preaching series that would

show the whole church fulfilling its vision and mission. The entire church would be able to digest the word of God together slowly and go together in the same direction.

The Intentional Church

Randy Pope was the senior pastor of the Perimeter Church in Duluth, Georgia, and founded over twenty churches. The intentional church is the transformational church that starts with an effective ministry plan (Pope and Pope ch. 2). An effective ministry plan is formed with a clearly stated purpose, vision, mission, and philosophy. It consists of a strategically designed organization of people with detailed job descriptions. The ministry plan is guided by roadmaps and specific steps to accomplish the vision and mission of the church. Like the simple church, all ministries are aligned to the ministry plan.

The intentional church defined two main functions contributing to the community's transformation. One is for edifying the church members; the other is outreach activities to the community (Pope ch. 2). Activities that would edify the church members are evangelism, life-on-life discipleship, sermons, assimilation of new members, and caring for small groups. Activities for community outreaches include assessing the community's needs, providing services that would address the community's needs, partnering with fellow churches and organizations to expand ministry, and church planting. All of these activities are concentrated on accomplishing the ministry plan of the intentional church.

The ministry plan is developed by a simple discipleship process that aims to develop mature and equipped followers of Christ and mobilize them to do effective transformational outreach in the community (ch. 2). Like other discipleship models, the

intentional church is geared toward community transformation. They have a clear strategy of developing intentional leaders who will accomplish the mission of God in the community. They serve as a catalyst that creates significant changes and is guided by the church and the Spirit of God.

The Perimeter church's planting strategy is effectively summarized by the phrase "*One church, many congregations*" (ch. 7). The Perimeter church's main site establishes new congregations five to ten miles away. Randy Pope maintains centralized teaching and preaching responsibilities in the main site and the other congregations for some time. The goal is to make the new congregations self-governing, self-propagating, and self-sufficient in their growing period. This is the state of being fully autonomous. In his article "Multisite Church," Andy Peterson shared Randy Pope's plan for the new congregations. Randy Pope says, "There comes a time in a congregation's growth when the multi-site congregation must be freed to own and develop the work the Lord has called them to and become a fully autonomous, self-governing church in its own right (qtd. in Peterson 75)." A growth timeframe is involved in developing new congregations, and the main congregation should intentionally execute it. The timeframe should be enough for the new congregations to rise as local churches. It should not be put into a hurry. The church should just let God grow the church.

The leadership team is also one of the factors that makes the intentional church effective. Their setup is TEAMS-based church leadership. TEAMS stands for truth, equipping, accountability, mission, and supplication (Pope and Pope ch. 9). The TEAMS bases its function on the small groups where nurturing and equipping of mature followers of Christ happens. There is studying of the word to develop knowledge and wisdom.

Accountability is applied to the members to promote discipline. Members are exposed to mission opportunities in the community through ministry services, and they develop a passion for praying for one another regularly.

One principle that the intentional church applies is scattering and gathering. To produce mature followers of Christ, the church must intentionally be scattered to its community (ch. 9). This is the beauty of the ministry plan of Perimeter church. They not only intentionally disciple people but also deploy disciples to the community. Randy Pope emphasizes:

Leadership is the key to church growth. If the church is really to succeed in its mission of witnessing to the non-churched world in the twenty-first century, it must develop aggressive, dynamic, and inspiring leaders. (ch. 10)

Leaders must handle the small group at home and mission in the same amount of time. There should be time for discipleship and then going out to the community and having that opportunity to apply the mission of God to others. Leaders should also guide their groups to spiritual disciplines, especially prayer and fasting. Alan Roxburgh talks about the role of a missional leader. He says:

The role of the missional leader is translation, helping people see that “this is that.” The first is discovering how to read their context, to see beneath the surface of supposed facts and distracting events to deeper levels of meaning. To do this, people must learn to ask new questions about their context and the church...

Pastors need to gain a deeper understanding of our society before they can develop the skills to take society into account in creating a church environment

that will generate a missional engagement with society. (Roxburgh and Romanuk 177)

Alan Roxburgh clearly explains that pastors and church leaders should have a strategic plan to analyze the target community and introduce it to the disciples. They need to plan ways to effectively engage the community by gaining that understanding and equipping the people with skills for proper engagement. The intentional scattering and gathering of the Perimeter church affirm this role to its leaders.

Perimeter Church has ways to assimilate people effectively, and they called them connecting points. The connecting point is the small group (Pope & Pope ch. 15). In the small group, there is training by modeling, equipping, and empowering people to share their faith with others. Small groups are seen as an ideal environment for Christian education. Perimeter Church has a well-written curriculum for discipleship in a small group setting. They intentionally mobilize their groups to evangelize and make disciples in the community. The church also has other groups for spiritual nurturing like the fellowship and service groups. Fellowship groups are big groups gathered according to ages and common interests; these foster relationships. Service groups offer opportunities for ministry services in the church and the community. These groups are connecting points for the person's spiritual journey.

The WIKI Church

Steve Murrell founded the Victory Church in the Philippines. It is a multisite megachurch that is a founding member of Every Nation. In his book *WikiChurch*, he described their model of discipleship process that empowers every believer to engage in the ministry actively. The discipleship process is simple, and it has four significant

stages: Engaging culture and community, establishing spiritual foundations, equipping believers to minister, and empowering disciples to make disciples. According to Steve Murrell, discipleship is not an event, encounter, or experience. It's an ongoing process (Murrell 144). The team with whom Steve Murrell was working was committed to making this discipleship process work consistently and engaging the target culture. He created a healthy discipleship culture with the leadership team by taking some time to make minor adjustments to understand discipleship (176). The leadership team did not make any radical changes in the church. Discipleship culture grew slowly in the leadership team and then passed on to other believers. And they just focused on perfecting how to make disciples rather than doing a lot of programs (177). The success of the growth of Victory Church in the Philippines was founded by the passionate and committed leadership team that intentionally engages the culture and community and makes disciple-makers within the small groups.

Wiki church's way of engaging culture and community is about building friendship bridges (189). Leaders engage the unchurched person by connecting to their common ground. It is not an aggressive way of evangelizing the person, but the goal is to develop a friendly relationship first while waiting for an opportunity to share the gospel. Engaging culture and community require the leadership team to analyze and understand the people. I find this an excellent strategy because it puts no pressure on the unchurched person to make an important decision in their life.

The second stage of the discipleship process is establishing spiritual foundations. The Wiki church's aim for every assimilated believer is to establish the foundation to make their lives able to overcome the trials of life. This can be done by establishing the

believer's faith in the Word and the church community (Murrell 236). Victory Church has a book called *The Purple Book*. As the new believers answer *The Purple Book*, they go through *The Purple Book* class, where the pastors teach them the essential beliefs of Christianity. They also have the Victory Weekend event, where every assimilated believer enters through a two-day revival retreat with God. The church's revival brings growth when a constant flow of new converts enters (McGavran and Wagner 142). This event facilitates deliverance from old ways, curses, sins, and hurts. And the member also learns how to live a victorious Christian life by discovering their own identity and purpose in God's kingdom. The key to establishing spiritual foundations is not to gain knowledge but to establish the believer's faith in Jesus as one continues to walk in his spiritual journey.

The third stage of the discipleship process is equipping believers to minister. As the small group leaders establish spiritual foundations for the believer, the believer will be encouraged to use their God-given gifts and talents to serve the church and the community. The leaders aim to prepare the believers to minister (248). The leader is usually called the mentor, and the mentor's role is to equip the believer to do ministry. The believer's participation in the ministry can result in spiritual maturity (254). Their mentors are intentional in reproducing disciples who will be active in the bulk of the church's ministry. Evangelism, discipleship, hospital visitations, encouragement, and community services are done by volunteer disciples who their mentors have equipped. The mentors expose their mentees to areas of the ministry to facilitate learning.

The last stage is empowering disciples to make disciples. The Victory leadership team intentionally creates a culture of empowering disciples that will make disciples.

They are focused on that one framework of making disciples (Murrell 292). As the mentors equip their mentees to do discipleship, there will come anytime they can be deployed already to lead their discipleship groups among their families and friends who are unchurched. These new disciple-makers may be leaders someday. And the challenge of Victory Church is to develop a multigenerational leadership who will continue to fulfill the Great Commission.

Victory Church before has a lack of developing new leaders. The leadership base was not large enough to compensate on the growing numbers of disciples. The healthy discipleship growth overwhelmed the leaders and leadership structures. The only viable solution to the multiplication challenge was accelerating the equipping and empowering of new leaders. Because if they do not constantly train new leaders, they will not experience multi-generational growth (Murrell and Murrell 86). Steve Murrell and the Victory Church leadership team have developed a leadership pipeline to solve their problem of the lack of small group leaders. The leadership pipeline is described in four stages of development. The four stages or principles of development are identification, instruction, impartation, and internship (4 I's).

The first is identification. This stage is where potential leaders are identified and their God-given gifts, calling, and opportunities to lead (89). There are five indicators for identifying a potential leader, and it is presented in an acronym F.A.I.T.H.: Faithful, Available, Involved, Teachable, and Hungry (Murrell & Murrell 101). These are the qualities to find in a potential leader. If these manifest, it will confirm their calling to the leadership ministry, and they can already start on the equipping, which is the next stage of the leadership pipeline.

The leadership equipping is the stage called instruction. Instruction is the formal training in which there is a transfer of essential information to the potential leader and provides the tools in the primary stages of leadership (90). The instructions or training provided are often helpful to the calling and gifting of the potential leader (123). Classroom training courses specific to the leader's calling are used. One can receive credentials upon finishing each course. Sunday sermons can be an avenue of instruction where the leaders can use the small group materials and teach them to their respective groups. There is also the personal study of the Word by creating a lifestyle of meditating and journaling. Good books are also provided to add references to learning. These tools are provided to the potential leader for their proper equipping.

The next important stage is impartation. Impartation shapes and strengthens the character of the leader. They should receive some mentoring and encouragement in the early stages of their leadership (90). Steve Murrell further describes impartation, and he says that "[i]mpartation is when God takes some of the Spirit that are on one leader and puts it on another. It is about helping the disciple become a better leader" (Murrell & Murrell 144, 147).

The established leaders of Victory Church take time to impart their mentee leader's wisdom, faith, generosity, trust, honor, and compassion.

The last stage is the internship. The internship is where the young leader is empowered to do ministry and receive opportunities to observe, learn, and lead alongside experienced leaders (90). There are three components of an internship for the mentee leader during the equipping and empowering. First is observation. This component allows the intern leader to watch and observe the mentor as they lead (165). The next component

is participation, where the mentor allows the intern leaders to learn and experience leadership. This learning is facilitated in a safe and healthy environment (166). The last component is evaluation. As the mentor steps back and allows the intern to experience leadership, the mentor spends time assessing the intern. Evaluation is essential, especially since interns can still commit multiple mistakes in their responsibilities (167). These three components of the internship will allow the young leader to prepare themselves for the challenges of leadership he will face in the actual ministry. The intern will gain confidence to minister and be competent in their ministry calling. The most important thing is building a relationship with the fellow leaders who will lead with them in the ministry.

This leadership development program boosted the mission of Victory Church, from intentional disciple-making to intentional Christian leaders-making. The concept produced exponential growth for the church qualitatively and quantitatively. The process happened because the church leaders responded well to the mandate of Jesus and were focused and consistent in improving their methods of intentional discipleship and leadership development. Church growth is born from the experiences of evangelists in the mission field who wanted to make it better and more effective (Towns and McIntosh 34). The pastor leader must possess a dynamic leadership that can catalyze the entire church into action toward growth and multiplication. Victory Church thrives to do better and make its discipleship process more effective, and the result is exponential here in the Philippines and abroad. A key is an intentional approach to disciple-making and leadership development to produce a yielding crop of souls for the Lord.

The Multi-site Church Growth Model

A multi-site church is one church that gathers in multiple locations that share a common vision, budget, and leadership (Towns and McIntosh 119). Multi-site is one of the effective strategies of church growth applied by many churches today. The average site size is around 250 or more people, and the central or sending church leads each congregation. This strategy can be easily implemented by medium-sized churches (200–800) and megachurches (2,000 and more). Becoming a multi-site church makes more disciples by drawing the church near the people (13). In this model, the church focuses on maximizing discipleship and evangelism to all people, leading them to obey the Greatest Commandment and the Great Commission. The focus is not on church growth strategy but on fulfilling the Great Commission, and that results in church growth.

The Great Commission and the Greatest Commandment are the biblical pulses of the multi-site model, offering more creative and innovative ways to present the Gospel (Stetzer and Bird 131). Most churches responded to doing multi-site because they ran out of options. They could not keep up with the growth, so they needed another solution (House and Allison 24). The church's response to the increase caused by God is to expand or extend the territory of influence to other places where there are still no churches. Multi-site means exponential growth in the church, which is not an end goal. If the church has been faithful in discipling people to make disciples, multiplication happens, and God is pleased. He will offer more opportunities to the church to be more faithful in His Kingdom by opening doors to more communities.

There is a difference between a multi-site model and a church planting model. The multi-site model shares one common vision, budget, and leadership with its

campuses. In a church planting model, the church sets up the outreach church with its vision, budget, and leadership team until it becomes a local church (Surratt et al., *Roadtrip* 40). The sending church in the multi-site model handles everything for their campuses. Everything is centralized. The outreach or daughter church in the church planting model can be semi-autonomous or independent from the sending church. It can set up its board with a ministry direction different from the sending church. According to Andy Peterson, multi-site campuses grow far more than church plants and have a more significant evangelistic impact (Peterson 64). The advantages of becoming a multi-site church include greater accountability, stewardship of resources, empowerment of lay leaders, shared DNA (vision and core values), more outstanding prayer support, and a united leadership team (Surratt et al., *Roadtrip* 40). A church can discern what model will be used to allow church growth. Both of these models significantly contribute to the Great Commission. Only leaders who discern God's will can choose the best strategy in their context.

The other advantage of a multi-site church strategy is that volunteer leaders have various opportunities to be involved because of the complexity of having multiple campuses (Surratt et al., *Roadtrip* 25). Each campus may require many logistics and human resources, such as media teams, ushering, music teams, etc. Volunteers from the main church may be excited to participate if one campus opens. Another advantage of a multi-site church strategy is expanding into multiple cultures (27). The standard distance of campus from the main is around 6 to 7 kilometers or more. The length can be a new town or city that slightly differs in culture depending on the geographical area. So, the

multi-site church strategy can reach multi-culturally and promote high volunteerism for many ministry workers.

Various factors drive churches to go multi-site. Sometimes multi-site serves as the best option to be added when a church is overcrowded in its facility. There can be a desire to target a new area for evangelization. Another reason is an immediate need for a community or a mission opportunity that triggers the creation of a campus (Surratt et al., *Revolution* 31). Multi-site has been about grabbing the opportunity to reach more people and share the Good News. So far, the multi-site model has been an effective strategy for transitioning churches, depending on the type of leadership team that the church may have. Brad House and Gregg Allison mentioned that multisite is a method that encompasses the significant church growth caused by God (42). A church experiencing church growth by God should expand and reorganize to contain the growth and effectively minister to all people in the church and community. Therefore, the church should be responsive to the growth flow given by God so that they will not hinder His purpose of expanding His Kingdom.

The Five Models of the Multi-site Church Strategy

There are five models of multi-site church that can be used depending on the context and situation of the church. First is the video-venue model. This model uses video-cast sermons on multiple campuses. The video can be done through live streaming or pre-recorded. North Coast Church used the model by Larry Osborne (Surratt et al., *Revolution* 18). The video-cast sermon is a two-dimensional screen image designed to construct an illusion of presence (Connable 127). In this setup, the sermon for every Sunday service is centralized and done by one assigned preacher from the main site.

Their sermon is simulcast to the different campuses via live streaming platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and other online church streaming platforms. Or it can be pre-recorded and played back to each campus. This model is good if there are only a few gifted preachers in the church to maintain the quality of sermon delivery to the whole church.

The second multi-site model is the regional-campus model. This model duplicates all the worship experiences on the original campus to other satellite campuses. This model was used by Willow Creek Community Church and New Life Church in the US (19). The sermon series, songs, and worship styles are being replicated by all the teams assigned to every campus to have a consistent experience wherever the venue is situated geographically. There can be a unified graphics design of regularly used church marketing and media and discipleship materials.

The third model is the teaching team model. This model leverages a robust teaching team across multiple campuses. Mars Hill Church is one example of this model (21). The teaching team designs their curriculum that would be used for every age and people group. The creative team, teachers, and curriculum writers collaborate to create and deliver a high-impact sermon or teaching for every small group of every age. The worship and teaching teams usually customize their delivery to meet the target community's needs.

The fourth model is the partnership model. This model creates a partnership with local businesses or non-profit organizations to use its facility for a rental arrangement (21). One example is the Stillwater United Methodist Church in Dayton, Ohio. It has developed an innovative partnership with the local YMCA, utilized their space for a new

campus, and shared the cost with the organization (Surratt et al., *Roadtrip* 60). The church was able to invest a small amount to upgrade their worship venue in the YMCA facility. Several months after, the church was able to form new campuses in a newly constructed YMCA facility. This model suits churches with a limited budget for a high-level worship experience. Creating partnerships with prominent organizations can make new campuses possible if done with great deals of relationships with each other.

The last model is called the low-risk model. The low-risk model decentralizes the church and uses smaller venues that can have different services with different teachers in other locations. The low-risk is described as having a simple program and low financial cost but a high guarantee of evangelism and church growth. One example is the Christ the King Community Church, pastored by Dave Browning (Surratt et al., *Revolution* 21). This church is very intentional and highly contextualized in its evangelization and discipleship. Their target is an effective propagation of small groups in multiple communities. They have formed multiple campuses in one region and expanded nationally in the US. They also extended their campuses internationally in Nepal and South Africa.

Throughout the year, all the campuses regularly contact the original campus through all means of communication (Surratt et al., *Roadtrip* 132). This extensive network has established unity in Kingdom building despite their distance. Usually, other churches planted regionally and internationally have been transformed into a semi-autonomous or autonomous state. These churches only meet during one-time events like convergences and summits, but there are no regular communication and synchronized teachings. The low-risk multi-site model has a sustainable approach of deliberate

simplicity and vital infrastructure (Surratt et al. *Revolution* 21). This model develops ministries that allow low financial cost and dependence on volunteer leaders to make the system simple but effective. They provide online training resources and centralized staffing, producing highly effective and efficient performance. This model offers an ideal approach for medium-sized churches with 200 people who want to transition into a multi-site strategy.

The Pitfalls of a Multi-Site Church Strategy

In planning to transition to a multi-site church, the leadership team should carefully plan how to launch a new campus and its long-term operation to avoid pitfalls. Planning a church growth strategy calls for team building to communicate and discuss where God wants them to go and how they will be able to achieve that goal (Damazio 63). David Angelo and Ryan Stigile identify seven pitfalls of implementing a multi-site church if not planned appropriately.

The first pitfall is having the WHAT without the WHY. The WHY is the main reason behind making a multi-site church. The WHY is the purpose for adding new campuses (D'Angelo and Stigile 4). The senior pastor should know why the church needs to transition into multi-site. It should be communicated and familiarized by his leadership team. That WHY should also be conveyed consistently to all the workers and the team assigned to the new campus. The WHY should be clear, compelling, and consistent. The most fundamental purpose and specific factor of creating multi-site churches is leadership development (Stetzer and Bird 134). Frank Damazio describes the WHY as the primary purpose, which is the kingdom of God, and the church is the divine vehicle to achieve that purpose (Damazio 91). The church wanting to become multi-site should develop

leaders that will continue the cause of the Great Commission in all-new campuses that will be launched. If every leader and staff have the same WHY, whatever the challenges along the way, the multi-site church and its campuses will stand firm and continue to propagate. The whole leadership team and the campus team must be familiarized and take the WHY of their ministry to heart. So, whenever major decisions arise in the future, those decision should be founded on the WHY.

The second pitfall is the failure to define the multi-site approach. A church should start by identifying the appropriate method for launching the multi-site. Everyone should understand what it means to be one church (D'Angelo and Stigile 7). D'Angelo and Stigile list three approaches that the church can use in establishing multi-sites. There is a franchise, localized, and church planting approaches. The franchise approach is the most centralized type. The teaching, worship styles, discipleship process, and organizational DNA originate from the main campus and are replicated on satellite campuses (11). The localized approach shares the same content, but the campuses can have their own set of teachers and music teams. The local campus can have its vision of its own as long as it shares the same global vision, mission, and values as the main campus. The regional campus applies the core discipleship process. Still, it has the freedom to develop secondary ministries that fit its context as long as it contributes to the core ministries of the main campus (12). The church planting approach gives liberty to the campuses to have their own teaching, worship, ministries, and organizational DNA depending on the context where they set in. If God's will be for the church to plant churches, leaders should not hinder local campuses by trying to keep them under the church's umbrella (16). To know the appropriate multi-site approach, the church planters and senior leaders

should pray, fast, discuss it together, executing any changes. The whole church must be on the same page.

The third pitfall is undervaluing the campus pastor. In launching a multi-site campus, the role of the campus pastor is critical. If the church does not invest time and money to train and hire a campus pastor, it will lead to poor stewardship of God's resources (D'Angelo and Stigile 19). The campus pastor is the representative of the main campus and must carry the DNA of the church. The selection of leaders for the campus is not an easy task. It requires years of training and exposure to the church's discipleship strategy. There are qualities a campus pastor must possess. First, the pastor needs to be a good relationship builder (20). The campus pastor should be able jump right in and engage the people when engaging the target community. The campus pastor must also know how to connect with businesspeople, government officials, schools, and other groups.

Another important quality is being a proven team builder and player (20). Since the campus pastor holds the church's DNA, they must impart all of it to the leadership team they will form on the campus. The campus pastor makes sure that the whole campus team should also know and carry the church's DNA. The church's DNA is the pattern of Kingdom life from the smallest group to the largest group, and its nature is the same, and its expression is constant (Cole 115). The campus pastor must always adhere to the divine truth of God's Word, nurture relationships with the fellow disciples of Jesus, and fulfill the mandate of the Great Commission. They must always champion the church's vision, mission, discipleship process, and core values.

The fourth pitfall is leaving the campus leaders without centralized support. All ministries that contribute to the church's mission must be replicated on the new campuses at the same level of effectiveness as the main campus (D'Angelo and Stigile 25). All the ministries involved in the multi-site mission should participate in the success of the new campuses. Each team should send delegates who will support the new campus to run the weekly services and the infrastructure needed to function effectively. These teams will maintain that the experiences felt on the main campus are applied to the new campus. These teams will also help develop new teams to reproduce the ministry practice.

The fifth pitfall is lacking a framework for decision-making. A system for decision-making should be established on the main campus (D'Angelo and Stigile 31). The key here is to have continuous leadership development that can facilitate learning for all leaders in the church. The leaders are allowed to take ownership of the ministry role and gain experience through its ups and downs. There is also teamwork for every team in every challenge they face regularly.

The sixth pitfall is operating without critical systems (D'Angelo and Stigile 36). Community systems attract more volunteerism because they confidently participate in every ministry with order and a straightforward process. If there is a protocol of a clear system, teams can collaborate and stay focused on dealing with problems and changes. A workflow should be established at the onset of launching a new campus. There should be a clear communication plan during vision casting and critical times.

The last pitfall is chasing a dream instead of launching with a plan (42). Creating multisite campuses requires a church to be in reality, not the wishful thinking of launching a new one. Before a multi-site strategic plan, the church or the main campus

should already be at the fullest and overflowing capacity. Trying to establish without entirely making the main campus maximum capacity will lead to poor handling of God's resources. The church will be in a weak financial position with only a few budgets that can be allowed to launch a new campus. A church should have at least three complete services to launch a new campus outside. Another indicator to know before launching a new campus is the increased number of people coming from a community. A new campus is best established in a society where the church is already reaching out. It is easy to launch there, especially if the church already has people they know who already lived there. So, it is better to know these indicators first before planning to launch a multi-site church.

So far, the multi-site church model for church growth has been the best option for church expansion. Going into this model will need an extensive team, good leadership development, and a radical church motivated to reach the unchurched by the Gospel. The senior or the lead pastor must spearhead and know how to navigate the whole church with sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit. The church that will make a transition must plan well and be always founded on the main purpose of going into multi-site. The church can sustain the work if it avoids the pitfalls that might destroy the multi-site church ministry.

Research Design Literature

This literature review contributes to the phenomenological research of lived experiences of the different churches and theologians regarding contextual discipleship and church growth. The above sections examined how churches grew out of their relentless passion for evangelism and discipleship. The use of a simple discipleship

process that can guide the church to fulfill its mandate in making disciples has been evident in the writings of the pastors and their success in leading their churches.

The phenomenon of going into a multi-site church model gives more interest to this research. It does not matter if the church is medium-sized or a megachurch. There is a typical response to go multi-site included in their ministry philosophy. Another reason for the chosen research design is the lack of references and further peer-reviewed studies about this phenomenon. It is vital to dig deeper into the experiences of a church that has already gone through a multi-site strategy.

Phenomenological research is qualitative research that describes the meaning for several individuals of lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell 57). This study describes what all the participants have in common regarding their experience with the contextual discipleship and multi-site church model in their churches when they experienced church growth. The type of phenomenological research used is transcendental phenomenology, which focuses on describing the participants' experiences (59). Clark Moustakas developed transcendental phenomenology in 1994, and he illustrated a procedure that consists of the following guideline (60).

The data collection is done through in-depth interviews and multiple interviews. Other data forms may include observations, journals, art, poetry, music, and other art forms. The questionnaires ask two broad, general questions: What have you experienced regarding the contextual discipleship and multi-site church model that leads to church growth? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the contextual discipleship and multi-site church model? These two general questions will allow the participants to relate their everyday experiences.

The data analysis for phenomenological research has its steps. First, the researcher analyzes the data, including all interview transcriptions, artifacts, and responses to online questionnaires. The second is *horizontalization*, highlighting significant statements, sentences, or quotes explaining how the participants experienced the phenomenon. Third, the researcher creates clusters of meaning from these meaningful statements into themes.

The significant themes from the data collected are then written into descriptions of the participants' various experiences. The researcher can also describe the context or setting that influenced the participants who experienced the phenomenon. The researcher can also write his own experience and the context and situations that have influenced their experiences. The researcher then writes a combined description from the written reports presenting the phenomenon's essence.

It is significant in this research to learn about and from the experiences of the churches who experienced how to have a contextual discipleship process and multi-site strategy that leads to church growth. This research will encourage small to medium-sized churches that want to experience the same church growth in their contexts.

Summary of Literature

The discovery of best practices of contextual discipleship that lead to church growth is evident in the references from known authors in the literature review. The methods were biblically theologically founded in the church growth and theology of discipleship in the New Testament. Church growth is the result of effective implementation of the discipleship process.

The discipleship process can be effective if a person or the church desires to follow Jesus genuinely. The marks of the disciple are faith and obedience to God, love for God and other people, counting the cost, and faithfulness to the Great Commission. The two great passages (Greatest Commandment and Great Commission) are the pillars of a healthy disciple of Jesus. These passages have been the foundational purposes of the churches, which have grown well and went through expansion by church planting or multi-site approaches.

The discipleship teachings of Jesus in the Parable of the Sower and the Talents talk about the faithfulness and fruitfulness of the disciple. One should be planted on good soil for it to produce plenty. These passages should encourage believers to be fruitful in their spirituality and the ministry God has assigned them in this world. Those who remain faithful will have their reward in the end and be given more significant responsibilities that are further opportunities for fruitfulness.

Church growth in the New Testament is also evident. Paul described the principles of church growth as being a faithful master builder. One must ensure that God causes growth, and the builder is tasked to give the best by laying the foundation of Jesus Christ in every church. At the end of time, every work will be tested by fire, and one must ensure that the work for the church and God's Kingdom should be quality made like gold, silver, and precious stones. These principles are being applied by all churches that applied intentional discipleship and did not hesitate to expand and launch new campuses.

The early church experienced a rapid church growth. It is normative that today's churches should learn how the early church grew in their faith in God and grew in numbers. The book of Acts has been a standard reference for church growth. There was a

pattern of intentional evangelization, house-to-house discipleship, growing in the Word of God, the fellowship of the believers, persecution, and scattering to other places. Then the cycle restarts. Although persecution today is not as rampant compared to what had happened in the early church, the passion to spread the Gospel has always been the passion of the churches today. Some church growth patterns of the early church can still happen in churches today.

In this literature review, some churches modeled a good discipleship system and church growth. All of them have one thing in common. They all have an intentional approach toward disciple-making and church leadership development. Their discipleship processes are simple and easy to apply. The discipleship process has a clear path of spiritual growth and maturity for every disciple. Another thing in common is the impact of small groups on the development of disciples. Every small group disciple is cared for, equipped, and empowered to make disciples for Jesus. All churches have the same thrust: to make disciples who will make disciples for Jesus. Leadership development is the key to growing the church. Churches are to have a clear and simple leadership pipeline to expand the propagation inside the church and outside in the community and beyond.

The last part talks about the multi-site church model. This church growth strategy is revealed as effective by many churches in the US. There are a lot of volunteer opportunities in these churches, and the program is unique compared to the church planting strategy. The nature of the approach is a bit controlling because of its uniformity and centralized ministry. But it has desired results as long as the lead pastor avoids some pitfalls. Leadership is the key to implementing this approach, and the results are promising when done according to plan.

Therefore, the concept and literature of contextual discipleship and the multi-site church model in this review will contribute to the development of this research. The study will serve as a reference to the questions and interviews applied to all the participants.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter describes the research methodology used in this project. After a brief review of the nature and purpose of the project, the project's research questions are presented, along with the instrumentation used to address each question. The cultural context of the project is then presented, followed by specifics on the participants in the studies, the instrumentation employed, and the data analysis process.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to discover best practices in implementing contextual discipleship that moved churches from a single-site church to multi-site churches with pastors and church planters from thriving Filipino Evangelical churches in the Philippines and in Canada. The discovery of best practices in the ministry of various thriving churches can influence how small and medium-sized churches do ministry. Especially in discipleship and church growth, churches can share their experiences as to how they consistently implement processes and make them relevant to their current context. The stories and experiences of the thriving churches can, in some ways, influence the ministry praxis of the small and medium-sized churches that aspire to fulfill the mandate of Jesus—to make disciples.

This project aims to discover best practices in implementing contextual discipleship that moved churches from a single-site church to a multi-site church with pastors and church planters from thriving Evangelical churches in the Philippines and in

Canada. Word International Ministries churches will benefit from the experiences of the thriving evangelical churches within the context of the Philippines.

Research Questions

The research questions provide guide the purpose of this dissertation. A semi-structured interview questionnaire was administered to the participants (Appendix A). The researcher will use RQ 1 and 2 for semi-structured interviews and RQ 3 for focus groups using the FGD questionnaire found in Appendix B.

RQ #1. What are the experiences of pastors in having contextual discipleship and multi-site strategy in their churches?

This question discovers the real experiences of pastors in implementing their contextualized discipleship program in the church. It also seeks to explore their experiences in starting a multi-site church strategy in response to church growth. Questions 1–3 inquire about the church’s DNA (vision, mission, core values, and discipleship process). Questions 4–6 ask about the experiences of pastors with regards to their small group discipleship. Questions 7–11 ask about the impact of discipleship in every area of spiritual development in the church. Question 12 provides space for the pastor to relay their experience concerning opening a new congregation or campus.

RQ #2. What is the context or situation of the churches involved that have typically influenced their experiences of contextual discipleship and multi-site strategy that leads to church growth?

This question discovers the actual situation of the church that contributed to the experiences the pastors have in discipleship and multi-site strategy. Questions 13–14

inquire as to the situation of the discipleship culture of the church. Questions 15–16 ask about the factors that lead the pastor to respond to the growth of their church.

RQ #3. What are the best practices of the churches with regards to contextual discipleship that lead to a multi-site church?

This question discovers best practices for implementing contextual discipleship and multi-site ministry. This questionnaire was used in the focus groups (Appendix B). Question 1–6 ask the pastor to speak to the best practices on church discipleship. Questions 7–9 inquire about the best practices for multi-site ministry.

Ministry Context

This research project was done within single and multi-site Evangelical churches in the Philippines and in Canada. These churches are under the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC) is an organization of seventy-eight (78) Christian denominations members and more than 200 para-churches in the Philippines. Word International Ministries denomination is a member of PCEC. The local churches that Word International Ministries have in the Philippines are single-sites ranging from small to medium in size. Each church has one or two services with a membership ranging from fifty to two hundred and fifty. Some outreaches range from twenty to fifty in membership.

The multi-site churches in the Philippines have an average of three or more campuses or congregations planted in most of the regions of the country. Each congregation is usually comprised of five hundred to two thousand attendees. Churches that have thousands of attendees are categorized as megachurches. They are more organized and financially stable to the point that they can rent large venues, purchase lots,

construct buildings, and buy equipment. Church growth can be the result of an intentional discipleship approach. The multiplication of small groups measures the growth of each church.

Certain factors can limit churches from forming multi-sites. One hindrance is the poor economic status of a single-site church especially if that church's main target is the poor urban community. Although this is an excellent missional approach, there can be a lack of effort in reaching out to middle to higher-class people. Due to their poor economic status, pastors cannot go into a full-time ministry, and they tend to have a bivocation to provide for their families. High rental rates of facilities and operation expenses pose a challenge to single-site churches. Some members of a single-site church transfer to megachurches to find ministry opportunities. Some members avoid conflicts in church leadership.

Participants

This section describes the participants who were involved in the research. Every church participant is represented by a senior pastor, discipleship pastor, or a church planter whose church has experienced growth through discipleship.

Criteria for Selection

The participants that were selected in this study went through purposive sampling. Five Filipino Evangelical churches have systems that have resulted in multi-site campuses or congregations. The five multisite churches were Victory Church Ortigas, Christ's Commission Fellowship Angono, Word International Ministries Ontario, Word International Vancouver, and New Life Main.

An email approval was sent to the lead/senior pastor of the church inviting their institution to be part of the research project. When approved, the lead pastor recommended himself or one of his choice pastors whom he see deemed fit with the criteria for the participant in this research. A signed copy of the approval letter was then sent back to me for their confirmation to do the interview. Then a schedule of the interview was agreed upon by the researcher and the participant.

To establish a triangulation for this study, single-site churches were also selected to understand and see their perspective regarding the phenomena. The chosen single-site churches were Word International Ministries Pasig, Word International Ministries Bacolod, and Word International Ministries Alabang. Based on the researcher's judgment, these churches were included in the sample.

Description of Participants

A senior pastor, a discipleship pastor, or a church planter represented each participant church. These pastors grasp how their church has grown through an effective discipleship process. They can talk about the history and the experiences of transitioning from a single to a multi-site church. The researcher determined the selection by personally asking each church participant. If the person does not fit the description, they can refer to someone who has more experience with the phenomenon.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure the confidentiality of all participants' testimony, several considerations were taken by the researcher. First, every participant received an email about the research and interview. The email stated the request for participating in the interview and the guaranteed protection of their personal information and testimony (Appendix C). Second,

the researcher followed up with an informed consent that gave permission for the research to occur and reiterated to them the confidentiality throughout the whole process of the study (Appendix D). All video and audio recordings from the interviews were stored on an external hard drive where the file folder is password protected. The researcher produced a list of all the participants with an assigned code through an Excel file, and he stored it in a password-protected folder on an external hard drive. Only the researcher has access to the lists. The researcher completely deleted every file after the dissertation was published.

Instrumentation

The research-designed questions are divided into questions for contextual discipleship and church growth through a multi-site strategy. Questions in Appendix A were used for semi-structured interviews. Questions in Appendix B were for focus groups. The open-ended questions allowed the participants to express their experiences freely. Since this is phenomenological research, the research questions were designed to discover the experiences of the pastors in terms of contextual discipleship and multi-site church growth in their context. A video recording of the interviews was kept to ensure that the transcripts and notes were accurate.

For the semi-structured interview, all the participants from the eight churches were invited to an online or face-to-face meeting. The online forum was done via the Zoom conferencing app, and the session was recorded. If the interview was through a face-to-face meeting, the appropriate venue was a room in their church facility where they would feel comfortable. A voice recorder was used during the interview with the participant's permission. An informed consent letter was read before the start of the

interview stating the purpose of the study, benefits of the participant and for this research, ethical considerations, and confidentiality of the collected data. The questionnaire guided the interview, and there was an occasion where follow-up questions were rendered to deepen the answer to the main questions.

The focus group method was facilitated into two groups. The single-site and the multi-site churches were scheduled to have an online focus group session to answer RQ 3, which discovers best practices of contextual discipleship and multi-site church. One group was composed of five (5) pastors or church planters with an effective discipleship process in their church and multi-site campuses or congregation. The other group comprised three (3) pastors or church planters with a working discipleship process and constitutes a single and medium-sized church. The focus group discussion was led by the researcher as the facilitator. The discussion was be done through an online Zoom conferencing app where it was recorded. That recording served as the notes.

Focus group discussions aim to obtain information about the group's experiences, beliefs, and attitudes on a particular issue or problem. The questions in this study asked about the specific discipleship process and its contents. They also inquired about leadership and team development that caters to forming new congregations or campuses. The participants in the focus group interacted with each other, guided by the questionnaire and the protocol (Appendix B). The focus group discussion was recorded to ensure information backup. The recordings were used as data of identified vital words, common themes, and shared methodologies.

The facilitator used the below questionnaire to describe the topic in this study. The discussion contained follow-up or probing questions for the facilitator if needed. The

goal was for the conversation to flow naturally, and so the group members could raise some topics. The facilitator followed the lead of the group members as they raised some issues during the discussion. The facilitator respected the dignity and confidentiality of the participants.

Expert Review

The questionnaire used for this research (Appendix A and B) underwent an expert review by Dr. Ellen Marmon, Dr. Winston Reyes, and Dr. Milton Lowe. I presented the questionnaires to them and had them review them along with the purpose statement and the background of the study. Specific protocols for the questionnaire were given to the participants. The interview had a one-hour limit. After the experts reviewed the instrument, I took note of their suggestions and considered making changes to the questionnaire before the actual research started.

Reliability & Validity of Project Design

All of the experiences and best practices that the participants shared through the interviews and focus group discussion served as grounds for the reliability and validity of this research.

The semi-structured interview questionnaire was given to two groups of churches. One group of five are multi-site churches, and the other are three single-site churches. The researcher also wrote down his own experience. Then a focus group was formed to answer the remaining questions that discuss their best practices on contextual discipleship and multi-site church growth strategy. Then themes from all participant churches were consolidated and analyzed.

The triangulation of the single-site (insider) and multi-site (outsider) participants and the researcher's point of view contributed to the reliability and validity of this research. The single-site church group was the outsider angle, and the multi-site church group was the insider angle. The researcher was the third angle of the Venn diagram. The three angles of vision have served as angles of interpretation (Sensing 76). This method will strengthen the outcome of this research.

Data Collection

The type of research for this ministry project is pre-intervention. This study aims to discover the best practices of contextual discipleship that lead to church growth in the Philippine Evangelical context. The qualitative research used for this study is phenomenological research. Phenomenological research is qualitative research that describes the meaning for several individuals of lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell 57). The type of phenomenological research used is transcendental phenomenology, which focuses on describing the participants' experiences (Creswell 59). Clark Moustakas developed transcendental phenomenology in 1994.

The data collection was done through in-depth semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions. The questionnaires asked two broad, general questions: What have you experienced regarding the contextual discipleship and multi-site church model that leads to church growth? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the contextual discipleship and multi-site church model? These two general questions analyzed the participants' everyday experiences and were conducted via in-person or video conferencing (via Zoom). The researcher made a

purposive sampling of the Evangelical churches with a discipleship process contextually designed for their church and was able to launch two (2) or more multi-site campuses in the Philippines and in Canada. The researcher selected pastors or church planters who have experienced or pioneered the discipleship process and multi-site ministry in their own church. Then the researcher sent an invitation for research by emailing the participants. The researcher and the participants then scheduled the interviews.

During the semi-structured interview, the researcher made an introduction to set the stage of the interview, including the background of the interview, the significance, details about the confidentiality agreement, and how the results of this study will be used for the future of the church (Sensing 108). The informed consent was read before the interview or the focus group discussion started. Then the researcher had every participant sign the informed consent (Appendix D).

The researcher introduced the two research questions (RQ #1 and #2) to inform the topics to be discussed. In every question, follow-up questions were made to add depth to the participant's response. The researcher took notes and pointed out important words and themes at the early data collection stage. Towards the end of the interview, the researcher asked concluding questions that wrapped up the discussion. The researcher wrote his notes in the summary sheet that contained all the stories, ideas, and reflections. The researcher invited the participant to join a scheduled focus group discussion with other churches.

Focus group discussions were scheduled between two groups. One group represented the single-site churches, and the other was the multi-site churches. The researcher generated the group interaction, data, and insights (Sensing 120). Although

each participant belonged to a group where they are the same in status, all of them were able to interact with their group by prompting or modifying their responses. The questions under RQ #3 and the protocol d the group interaction (Appendix B). There were five members for each group that are unrelated or acquainted with each other. The moderator read first the ground rules that would set the tone of kindness, respect, and confidentiality with the whole group (Sensing 123). The entire focus group discussion session was recorded in the Zoom conferencing app. All video and audio recordings from the interviews were stored on an external hard drive where the file folder is password protected. After the research and dissertation, all recorded data were completely deleted from their storage.

The researcher produced a list of all the participants with an assigned code through an Excel file, and he stored it in a password-protected folder on an external hard drive. Only the researcher had access to the lists. The researcher destroyed every file after the dissertation was fully published.

Data Analysis

As the researcher collected all the data from semi-structured questionnaires, he reviewed the data, including all interview transcriptions. The researcher transcribed all the data. The researcher used *horizontalization* by highlighting significant statements, sentences, or quotes explaining how the participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell 60). Then the researcher created clusters of meaning from these meaningful statements into themes.

The significant themes from the data collected have been written into descriptions of the participants' various experiences. The themes were colored-coded to identify the

same response from all participants. The researcher described the context or setting that influenced the participants who experienced the phenomenon. The researcher wrote his own experience and the context and situations that have influenced his experiences. The researcher then wrote a synthesized description from the written reports presenting the phenomenon's essence.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Contextual Discipleship seems to have been a benchmark or model to many churches in the Philippines. These large multisite churches offered discipleship conferences. The goal of every teaching is an intentional approach to disciple-making. However, small and medium-sized single-site churches like a local church, Word International Ministries Taytay, are still struggling to apply the principles of discipleship that led to church growth. This ministry project aimed to discover best practices in implementing contextual discipleship that moved churches from a single-site church to multisite churches with pastors and church planters from thriving Evangelical churches in the Philippines and Canada.

This chapter defines the participants in the study. Then this chapter presents the coded qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion for each of the three research questions. This chapter concludes with a list of major findings from the presented data.

Participants

The initial invitation for the interview and focus group discussion was sent to seven (7) multisite churches and six (6) single-site churches in the Philippines and Canada. Two (2) of the pastors who have multisite churches did not respond to the invitation. Three (3) single-site churches could not make it to the scheduled interview and focus group discussion. The churches that participated in the interview and focus group discussion were five (5) multisite churches and three (3) single-site churches.

The participants were all male pastors who met the qualifications for this study. Three were (3) senior pastors, two (2) discipleship pastors, one founding pastor, one overseer, and one campus pastor. The pastors of the multisite churches have an experience of five (5) and more years in their churches doing contextual discipleship and church expansion. The pastors of the single-site churches were highly experienced and had pioneered their churches for a very long time.

Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

What are the experiences of pastor/s in having contextual Discipleship and multisite church strategy?

The qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews provided the experiences of the pastors. By coding and analyzing the data, I predetermined three (3) major categories that served as experiences of these pastors in having contextual discipleship and multisite strategy in their churches.

An Organic Church DNA

The church DNA questions were composed of the vision and mission, core values, and the discipleship process of every church. When I asked about their churches' official vision and mission statements, participants (pt.) 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8 have a common vision and mission statement that includes honoring God and making or creating committed followers of Jesus Christ:

“Our mission is winning people to become followers of Jesus Christ. The organization’s name defines who we are and what we want to do. It is simple to make it more understandable to anyone who can know. We try to live the vision in order to communicate it effectively. The vision is relatable and practical.” Pt.1

“Our vision is to see a movement of millions of committed followers of the Lord Jesus Christ meeting in small groups and transforming lives.” Pt. 2

“We exist to honor God and make disciples.” Pt. 5

“Through this ministry, we build communities of families where lives, regardless of their origin or status, are drawn and transformed to reflect the image of Jesus Christ and to shine like stars in a dark world for the glory of our God.” Pt. 6

Among the participants, only participant 3 shared a vision of the kind of people their church wants to be and whom to target. He said, “Our vision is to become a truly biblical church. We aim to multiply into smaller, more effective, more community-based churches.” All the respondents were convinced by and had memorized the vision and mission of their churches.

When I asked about the core values of their churches, all respondents had outreach, evangelism, and community engagements as part of their core values. Participants 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8 had discipleship as one of their core values. Participant 5 stated about discipleship: “We value spiritual growth. Because we are called to make disciples. discipleship is our primary focus.” Participant 7 also shared his take on discipleship as a core value. He said, “We are committed to the task of discipleship. We believe that the call to make disciples involves the mandate to train the disciples in the ways of Jesus.” Moreover, all of the respondents had the same core value in their church regarding building and maintaining good relationships. Participant 6 said on relationships, “We cherish the concept of the community of faith as a family recognizing that all believers are united in the Lord and therefore must share lives in the love of God.”

One of the unique core values of the large multisite churches was that of the family. Participants 2, 4, and 5 were the only churches with family as their core values. Here are their explanations regarding the family as a core value:

“We engage the family by spending quality time and good relationships with them. We set a Christ-like example for all our family members and want to see them walk and serve the Lord together. We intentionally disciple our families by having regular devotions because we believe discipleship begins at home” (Pt.2).

“We value long-term relationships. Because the family is the foundation and validation of ministry. We refuse to sacrifice our marriage and children for temporary successes in the ministry” (Pt.5).

“Enjoying life – that core value is doing life together as a family and community” (Pt. 4).

A core value of biblical integrity was mentioned by participants 3, 4, and 5.

Participant 3 said, “We value biblical integrity because we want our church to live a life of integrity and biblically sound doctrine. This is in response to false teachings that crept in our church in the past.” Participant 2 said, “We obey God’s Word and authorities. We must apply God’s Word every day of our lives. Participant 5 also said, “We value obedience because Jesus is our Lord. We believe that wholehearted submission to His Word is the starting point of the Christian faith and the foundation of all spiritual growth.”

When asked about their discipleship process, six participants shared the journey’s starting point: reaching out to the unchurched or unbeliever. Here are their responses:

“We engage and build a relationship with unbelievers, and then we invite them to join retreats and our Sunday service, and after that, we will encourage them to join a small group.” Pt. 2

“We engage community and culture first because it is our call to be salt and light to everyone. Wherever we are situated, we engage the people and the culture. We spend time with them, with the goal of preaching the Gospel.” Pt. 5

“We first connect with people. We win by intentionally seeking friendships with all people with the love of God that meets them where they are.” Pt. 7

Two participants noted the starting point of discipleship as when the person becomes converted and becomes a member. Participant 1 said, “Discipleship starts after a person has been evangelized and become a new follower of Jesus Christ.” A unique approach of one participant is the manifold yet adaptable discipleship processes applied for every satellite church. He developed a process that is contextualized to a particular congregation or satellite. “We start with basic Christianity, and the person gradually moves up. We do not have just one step for everybody. We don’t intend to limit the discipleship process to just one approach” (Pt. 3).

All respondents have a distinct last stage of the discipleship process: empowering leaders. Participant 2 described this stage as bearing fruit. He further explained, “The goal of this level of discipleship is bearing fruit by equipping the members of the D-group to make Christ-committed followers who will make Christ-committed followers.” Participant 7 responded, “To empower leaders is like replicating yourself. I went through the process, and now I will share this experience with others.” Participant 7 said, “We win by empowering leaders who will continue to fulfill God’s mandate of making

disciples for the church and His kingdom.” One significant response is what Participant 1 mentioned, “Every stage of the discipleship process should be done in the context of the relationship.” All churches have one typical discipleship journey that moves people from new birth to becoming committed followers of Jesus.

Small Group Discipleship

Participants responded to the category of small group discipleship according to the description and the form or type of small groups they have in their churches. When asked about the description of the small groups in their church, Participants 1, 2, 4, 6, and 8 described it as relational discipleship. Participant 4 said, “We share life during the week. We communicate to the small group leaders why we do what we do. They continue to grow, and people started to be blessed, they feel loved, they see the value of relationships.” Participant 8 had a practical way of describing their small groups. He responded, “Our disciple-makers are hosting dinner bible studies and coffee table mentoring. We are emphasizing relational discipleship and relational leadership more.” Another pastor described the small group as “the main discipleship engine” (Pt.1).

One standard description of the small groups is sermon-based small group discipleship. Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 have a regular sermon series in their churches. They have small group discussion guides or materials provided for every small group to be discussed within the week based on the preaching last Sunday. Each guide has its pattern or outlines used by the small group leader to facilitate with the group members during their meetings. Participant 1 said:

We always have preaching discussion guide for our Life groups. Warm-up questions were asked to open a discussion. Then we observe the passage that was

assigned or was preached last Sunday. There were process questions that served as a guide for a fruitful discussion in the small group. After we have observed the passage, we relate to it and allow some processing time by discussing some personal applications or thoughts. Then the last thing is we decide on how to apply the word in our lives. We call the members of the group to take action.

Participant 5 shared about the nature of the questions used in the discussions. He said, “The small group materials were designed to deliver non-controversial questions but practical in a way relevant to all types of members, whether they are new or old. This guide is created to support the preaching message last Sunday.” Participant 7 added, “The focus of the small group is the questions for discussion. The power of reflection is more powerful for the growth of an individual. Life testimonies and insights shared with the group contributed to every person’s learning, including the facilitator.”

An essential description of small group discipleship is accountability. Participants 2 and 5 differ in perspective regarding accountability in the small groups. Participant 2 said, “After the discussion of the word, we do accountability. It is about sharing your life with them. Coaching and challenging them. Sooner or later, that is what we are doing; you will be doing it, also. Accountability is the number one priority.” Participant 5 responded, “Regarding accountability, not to the point the group leader would take control. We came to a season when the group leader was the one who dictated the choices and decisions for the accountability partner. The person seems to listen more to his group leader than God. We realized and changed our perspective that accountability is more about journeying together. The group leader is there to walk with you, not to take control of you.”

Another helpful description of small group discipleship shared by the participants is the safe environment of the small group. Participant 6 mentioned, “We felt belongingness. We taught the small group leaders to facilitate. We listen more. Teaching is also important at some point. It can help them grow in knowledge and understanding to be transformed inwardly. Nevertheless, the most attention was given to listening effectively to the insights of the group members.” Participant 5 added, “The small group was a safe place for every attendee to express and share their opinions and insights.”

When asked about the form or type of small group discipleship, Participant 2 shared, “The classification of our small groups is formed across all life stages. It is homogenous – males are separated from females in the youth and young adult groups.” Participant 1 described the type of small group they use: “Those who usually relate and identify to one another form their Life groups. They naturally merge according to common interests and needs. The Life groups are more open to anyone. Even a newcomer can still attend.”

The Impact of Discipleship

The last set deals with the impact of discipleship in the various aspect of church ministry. When asked about the impact of discipleship on people’s faith development, Participant 1 shared, “The spiritual development of the church has to be intentional. There has to be a plan to pass on or transfer a person to another stage of development.” Participant 2 responded, “The focus of our church is not on attendees. We always focus on the number of small groups and the number of small group members. This is crucial to the health of the church.” Participant 8 shared the essential embedding or soaking of the disciples in the word of God. He said, “We teach a particular lesson for a very long time

because we wanted the message to be embedded in their hearts and flow to their decisions and actions. As they continue to study a biblical topic, eventually they will start living it out.”

When asked about the impact of discipleship on the vibrancy of worship, Participant 1 shared, “Discipleship leads to deep worship. Worship is giving glory to God in every sphere of life.” Participant 2 shared about how discipleship impacts the worship in the church. He said, “Worship is part of our DNA. The theme starts with worship and is then strengthened by the sermon. Then usually, the service is ended with a song related to the message. So, it is a total experience.”

Participants 1, 4, and 8 shared that the right relationship with God influences volunteerism when asked about the impact of discipleship on the volunteer workers:

“Discipleship not only changes you but also helps you reach unto others. It changes the way you relate with others. Christ being built in you overflows to the world around you” (Pt. 1).

“People were blessed on how intentional are the volunteer workers who worked in the community. Before we do any programs, we want people to be grounded in the Word with the dependency on the power of the Holy Spirit” (Pt. 4).

“It is natural for the workers to take initiative in supporting all the needs of the ministry of the church. We have equipped them to rely on the leading of the Holy Spirit” (Pt. 8).

When asked about the impact of discipleship on the church’s work in the community, Participant 1 shared, “It is difficult to reach out to people outside the church without the participation of the disciples. Discipleship makes the outreach authentic and

genuine.” Participant 3 shared their experiences with a multicultural church. He said, “Loving your neighbor is a good, old-fashioned practice. You get to know them by sharing meals and by doing activities together. We celebrate each culture by serving them their own meals and ethnic food. They invited us to their homes when we get to know them more. They also learn our own culture and enjoyed the fellowship as well.”

Participants 1, 2, 5, and 6 mentioned that they ran a preaching series in their churches when asked about the impact of Discipleship on preaching and teaching the word. Participant 2 shared, “All preachers will submit their sermon outlines to the head pastor for checking. A week before the service, the preaching team will select the best outline to use by all preachers in all satellites. We want every preacher to be aligned.” Participant 6 added, “Discipleship greatly impacts the preaching and teaching of the word in our church. We have a sermon series. We always align the preaching to our vision.” Participant 8 emphasized the importance of the altar call ministry during preaching. “I reiterate to the preaching team to preach intelligently obviously with the anointing, and it is always a constant reminder for them to practice altar call ministry. If people are not responsive to the message, we need to re-evaluate the approach of our message.” The altar call ministry was their usual tradition that invites or challenges people from the congregation to acknowledge Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. This ministry is also for those who wanted to recommit their lives to the Lord and be consecrated from the sins and secular ways.

The last question for RQ1 is how they feel when opening a new congregation or campus in response to growing members. Participant 4 shared, “I love watching new congregations or churches give birth because I love what we have in our church.

Furthermore, anything I can see multiplies in different areas of the nation or other nations. They carry the same heart, passion, and purpose. I love it because of its growing relationships.” Participant 8 responded, “When the congregation gets bigger, the delegation of responsibilities continues to expand. The leadership continues to expand.”

Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

What is the context or situation of the churches involved that have typically influenced their experiences of contextual Discipleship and multisite strategy that leads to church growth?

The context or the situation of the churches that influenced the experiences in Discipleship are categorized into three subcategories: the intentionality of the leaders, the multiplication of small groups, and the transition from single to multisite. When asked about the intentionality of the leaders, the congregations were influenced by the pastors’ and leaders’ modeling of intentional discipleship. Participant 5 shared his experience and said, “As a pastor, there is still intentionality for me to go out and reach the lost. I handle a group that invites unbelievers, a group of leaders, and another group where I am still introducing to them the Gospel. We do it not because we are pastors but because we are Christians.” Participant 5 also shared that the church had to develop intentionality in making disciples. “We always communicate discipleship. It is part of our language. Every year we have a discipleship conference that reminds us of our vision. It is part of our DNA. We try to remind the leaders of the main task through monthly leadership huddles and build a relationship with them.” Participant 8 shared about the impartation of discipleship intentionality. “We teach the people how to shepherd people. We invest in the lives of the people. I invited them to my home, and we talked about life and the

church. They got to learn more, and I got to know them. We impart to them all the experiences and learning we have received from the Lord.”

When asked about the small group multiplication in their churches, they shared how they handle it. Participant 1 responded, “From the beginning, the leadership communicated to the Life groups that part of their success is when they multiply. Multiplication should be celebrated. Part of the training of the Life group leaders is the multiplication of their group.” Participants 2 and 4 have the same response, “The trainees of every small group will handle a group of three or more. Later on, that group will naturally split or multiply when it grows” (Pt. 2). “When members of the small group began to feel the burden of reaching others, they naturally formed a group and took care of it” (Pt. 4).

When asked about their transition from a single site to a multisite, the situation of the pastors differs from one another. Participant 1 shared that they transitioned to being multisite when people from their main church relocated to another residence. They gathered those relocated families and then formed a new congregation. Participant 2 responded, “When the number of small groups in a particular area reaches fifty (50), we will start opening a satellite church.” Participant 5 shared that there were identified and unidentified people who responded to volunteer to serve in the new campus. They usually invite and call for volunteers from the main service who want to serve in the new location.

Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

What are the best practices of the churches with regard to contextual Discipleship that led to a multisite church?

The last set of questions inquired about the best practices of contextual Discipleship that lead to a multisite church. Five (5) subcategories were predetermined in this study: community outreach, assimilation of new believers, leadership development, partnership with other organizations, and financial management.

Community Outreach

Creating bridge events is the most common best practice in reaching the community with the Gospel. Participants 2, 3, 4, and 5 shared that they do bridge events and activities to create opportunities to engage the community and share the Gospel. Participant 2 shared, “We do bridge events like couples’ retreats, true life retreats, and encounters. We go to the campuses to conduct seminars and provide coaching. We have livelihood programs, house development, and minister to the police and the government. We take every opportunity that can bring everyone into a small group.” Participant 3 also responded, “We invited the students through campus ministries. We volunteer at non-profit organizations by providing food bags to the poor and helping clean up the community. We assess the needs of the community. We scheme to develop a friendship network. We called these bridge events.”

Another best practice in reaching the community is starting with the point of contact who lives in the community. Participants 6, 7, and 8 started their outreach with a point of contact. Participant 6 shared, “We start by prayer to the target community. Usually, we have a contact who lives in the community. We start a bible study, and as it grows in number, it will be recognized as an outreach of the church.” Participant 8 also responded, “We look and respond to point men. We assign leaders in every zone of the

city. We empowered them to start an outreach in their area. They are connecting to families, neighbors, and friends.”

The approach of all the churches in doing their outreaches is holistic. They reach all sectors of society. Participant 4 shared:

One of the things we endeavor to do is not get stuck in a certain category. So, we want to reach people that live not only in poor urban areas but also to those who live in subdivisions. We have a church planted in Tondo, one of Manila’s dirtiest, nastiest, and most densely populated places. However, our church there had 2,000 people in the congregation.

Assimilation of New Believers

The most common best practice for assimilating new believers in the church is the multi-anchoring or sticky church approach. Participant 5 shared a clear approach to this practice. He said:

In the second stage of our discipleship journey, we had a portion where we introduce them to the church community. We introduce them to other members of the church so that they get acquainted. Several years ago, we had a survey showing people who stayed connected with the church. The more they know the brethren, the more they stick around. We call it multi-anchoring.

Participant 6 also shared the same approach, “We make them belong into our small groups. One important aspect is when they have a relationship with one or more people in a group, that made them go back or stick around.”

Another best practice in assimilating new believers in the church is the focus on building a relationship with them. Participant 7 shared, “In assimilating people in the

church, you must build relationships with them. I realized that the key to being a relational church must be the church's culture. People should naturally assimilate in the church through established relationships." Participant 8 added, "We have the initiative to start building a relationship with them and then talk to them if there is a need because we assume that everybody brought into the church has a need."

A clear membership system is one best practice for assimilating new believers into the church. Participant 1 shared:

The new members, regardless of their level of spiritual growth, should go through the whole process from belonging to becoming. The membership class establishes what you do in the church. We have them sign a membership covenant, invite them to join a Life group, and encourage them to attend regularly and be a regular giver. The assimilation process is headed by the member relations, who are on top of the ushering team. This team cares for the person in every part of the discipleship journey. We use a church management software called Fellowship One Go. It helps us organize our church's handling of people and small groups.

Leadership Development

When asked how these churches develop their leaders, I observed three things: identifying, equipping, and empowering leaders. Participants 2, 5, and 6 have an approach to identifying a potential leader. Participant 2 said, "We identify leaders using FAST – Faithful, Available, Spirit-filled, and Teachable. If I already see these qualities in a potential leader, I will challenge him by assigning him to handle a small group." Participant 7 also shared, "In identifying leaders, we used FAST—Faithful, Available, Submissive, and Teachable." Participant 5 shared the acronym FAITH—Faithful,

Available, Involved, Teachable, and Hungry. They all clearly describe identifying or qualifying a potential leader to be trained and empowered.

In equipping leaders, participants shared about the impartation of leadership. Participant 4 stated, “I gave them time, heart, and convenience. We teach them and impart who we are in people’s lives. We demonstrate to them how we serve. You teach with your mouth and mentor with your life.” Participant 7 shared about equipping the three major areas of development in a person—the Head, heart, and hands:

The heart represents the center of the leader’s life and ultimately defines his character. It is to be safeguarded and kept pure and humble. The head or the mind represents the knowledge and views that will shape his actions. There should be constant renewal as old paradigms are changed in order to have the mind of Christ. Moreover, last is the hand which represents the actions of a servant leader towards a life of obedience. (Pt.7)

All of the participants shared their practices in providing training to the leaders. They hold conferences and leadership huddles regularly. They teach and model servant leadership. Through intentional mentoring of potential leaders, impartation happens.

When asked how they empower leaders in preparation for opening a new congregation or campus, the leaders were assigned to a specific ministry or mission. Participant 8 shared, “We empower them by giving them avenues for exposure into ministry. We send them out.” Participant 2 also shared, “I assign them tasks like handling a small group. Then we will assess and coach them until they can do it independently.” Participant 1 responded, “Most of the leaders we equipped came from the main church. We clarify and orient the leader who will serve a new congregation.”

When asked about how they decided to open a new service or congregation, Participants 2 and 5 had a precise gauge in transitioning. Both gauge it in the growing number of active small groups in the church and the area. Participant 2 was specific in numbers. They declare an outreach area if it already has 50 or fewer active small groups. They declare it a satellite church if small groups exceed 50.

Partnerships with Other Organizations

Four participants shared that they have established and sustained partnerships with other organizations to fulfill their church planting and multisite ministry. Participant 3 shared that they partnered with other Christian churches to deal with the issues of the community. To learn how to engage all kinds of people for the sake of the gospel. Participant 5 has an enduring partnership with the schools in every target location. They hold LIFE seminars and teach students about leadership, integrity, faith, and excellence. Through the schools, they started forming small groups. Participant 7 shared about their partnership with Perimeter church. It had a Kingdom investment program that caters to church outreach programs. They offered training for volunteer workers and financial aid to feed the poor. Participant 8 shared about his partnership with Merriwa International Foundation. This organization offered them discipleship training and leadership development in the church.

Financial Management

When asked how these churches manage the financial needs of their multisite ministry, Participants 1, 2, 3, and 5 have their centralization of funds for all their churches and satellites. They have one board of leadership that decides the budgeting and the releasing of funds to the specific needs of every satellite or congregation. Participant

5 explained, “The main or sending church is the one who financially manages the church planting area. All resources, manpower, volunteers, and equipment are shouldered by the main church until the satellite becomes self-sufficient.” Participant 1 responded, “Financial matters are cared for by the finance ministry and the board, which comes from the main church. The outreach does not start from scratch because a BIG brother is the main church responsible for all the resources, training, and culture, which takes years to build and is now already built in.”

Summary of Major Findings

After carefully deconstructing the interviews and focus group discussions that each of the eight churches took in, a few significant themes appeared at the top. These themes fit within the framework of discovered best practices in contextual Discipleship that leads to church growth by multisite churches.

1. Have a clear and simple church DNA.
2. Small group discipleship is the main focus for spiritual development.
4. The contribution of preaching to the faith development.
5. Relationship-based assimilation of people.
6. Intentional community engagement.
7. Intentional leadership development.
8. An organized system of leadership and financial management.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The pastors of the churches who had a contextualized discipleship and multisite strategy shared the relevant practices that made their churches grow in quantity and quality. All of the mentioned aspects regarding discipleship and multiplication are essential to the church's growth. Not one category should be left out because it can affect the church's health. This ministry research project explored the best practices of contextual discipleship that led to church growth by Evangelical churches with multisite strategies in the Philippines and some parts of Canada.

This chapter identifies seven findings from this ministry research project and elaborates on how each resembles personal observations, the literature review, and the biblical and theological foundations of the project. Then this will be followed through with the implications of the findings to the ministry, its limitations, some unexpected observations, and recommendations for further study are surveyed.

Major Findings

Have a Clear and Simple Church DNA.

I discovered that the churches that have grown have a clear and simple church DNA structure. A healthy church should have a clear vision, mission, core values, and a discipleship process that will dictate who they are and what they do. The leaders must live every feature first, and then the congregation will follow. The main goal of this church DNA is to make committed followers who will make committed followers of Jesus.

The majority of the churches have a shared vision and mission statements that include honoring God and making disciples that would make disciples of Jesus Christ. The main imperative of their vision and mission statements contributed to obeying the Great Commission. They are simplified and easy to understand. The pastors convey the vision and mission to the church by living them out and modeling them for all followers so that they can pass them on to others who will later follow Jesus. They communicate the vision and mission well to the whole church by regularly teaching it.

I have also observed the same important aspect concerning their core values. These multisite churches' main core values are outreach, evangelism, and community engagement. These core values describe the missional mindset of these churches. Most of them shared that discipleship is their language or part of their DNA. Discipleship is who they are, and it is their main focus. Three of the churches had discipleship in the family as a core value. Engaging the community is the initial action to fish for people and make them disciples. One essential core value is empowering leaders who make others commit to Jesus's followers. Leadership development is an essential and continuous process that makes the Great Commission attainable and sustainable.

Another part of the church's DNA is a clear and simple discipleship journey. Most of the participants shared that the discipleship journeys of their churches start from engaging the unbelievers and end with empowering the Christ-committed followers to make Christ-committed followers of Jesus. The discipleship journey that they have is based on relationships. So, it is not mechanical but somewhat organic because every part of the journey is based on relationships.

In my literature review, Ermias Mamo supports the church's DNA finding. The most focused part of the DNA of the church is discipleship. Mamo states that, for the church to exhibit a disciple-making culture, it has to be in the DNA of the church. Discipleship should be more than a program of the church (157). The main characteristic of the church's DNA is represented more by discipleship founded by Jesus Christ. The church's DNA comprises the divine truth, nurturing relationships, and mission (Cole 115). The vision, mission, core values, and discipleship process are elements that make the DNA of the church live well as designed by God. The elements of the church's DNA should be structured and communicated clearly and simply so that the church can easily understand and apply them in every area of the ministry.

The DNA should be the church's culture, which is first knit into the leadership culture (Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church* 125). The church leaders are the first to apply and make discipleship a church culture. Then this is handed over to their small group members until they can also make disciples of Jesus, who will make other disciples. Steve Murrell mentions that a discipleship process works effectively when the leaders commit to making it work consistently (168). Consistency in intentional discipleship in the church will create a grounded culture that lasts until Jesus's return. The time-tested core vision, mission, values, and discipleship process must be present in every church because a clear and widely shared DNA becomes the engine for expansion (Surratt et al., *Roadtrip* 49). To establish a discipleship culture, Mamo shares a multidirectional approach. Discipleship training of the leaders will help implement the discipleship journey. And as they do this consistently, it will become a discipleship culture (Mamo 162). Every ministry work and event will be aligned with the discipleship culture. Then

through time, the developing discipleship culture will acknowledge the church's identity that this is who we are and what we do for Jesus.

The biblical and theological foundation for the church's DNA are the two great passages: The Greatest Commandment (Matt. 22.36–40) and the Great Commission (Matt. 28.18–20). The vision, mission, core values, and discipleship process were based on these two great passages. It is the vision and mission of the church to honor God, and disciples should be sent to bring the Gospel to all nations. The main imperative “make disciples” in the Great Commission is the main mission of every disciple of Jesus. Each disciple should be baptized or assimilated into the body of Christ. A disciple should be taught to obey all the Scriptures and be sent out to make disciples of Jesus. That is how the discipleship process should be designed. The core values are founded in the greatest commandment, love your neighbor as yourself. A disciple, formed in the image of God, will reflect in his or her life the character of Jesus. Every action of the disciple is driven in the love (*agape*) of God. The church's DNA should honor God, be founded on the life of Jesus, and be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Small Group Discipleship is the Main Focus for Spiritual Development

One of the essential aspects of discipleship in multisite churches is the active and growing small groups. The small group is their main discipleship engine. Most participants shared that their small group discipleship is focused on building relationships. The relationship involves long-time members and leaders of the church, and even the newcomers, regardless of their background, can easily integrate with the group. They preserved that kind of warmth and safety in their small group meetings. These churches focused their efforts on spiritual development in small groups.

The standard method that the multisite churches have in developing the spiritual life in the small group members is sermon-based discussion guides. These guides are freely offered to every small group, and they discuss the sermon preached every week. Each guide has questions that stir discussion, reflection, and application of the word of God. The questions are designed to facilitate everyone in the group, whether they are long-time members or a newcomer. The small group leader facilitates the discussion and offers opportunities for everyone to share their insights and reflection.

Life in a small group matters. There was intentionality to build relationships and guide accountability for every small group member. The small group served as a safe place for every person who belongs to the group and is challenged to apply and obey God's word in every area of their life. This served as a place where disciple-makers were formed and trained. One sign of a healthy small group discipleship is that it multiplies. It makes committed followers who make committed followers of Jesus Christ.

The type of small groups formed in these churches fits all ages, gender, status, career, and preferences. Those who have common ground and lifestyles naturally merge. There are unlimited geographical places for their small group meetings. They meet in homes, online, coffee shops, offices, and any place where they can be comfortable to have fellowship. Each small group member is equipped to do outreach and make disciples of other people. Intentionality is developed in every member, which is why they naturally multiply. The small group leaders served as models of intentional discipleship. They all have the same goal, to make disciples who will make disciples of Jesus.

In my literature review, Larry Osborne's *Sticky Church* supports small group discipleship in bringing people to the church. Their focus is not on the number of Sunday

service attendees but on the percentage of people who belong to a small group. Their target is that 80% of the weekly attendees should belong to a small group. They focus on closing the backdoor of the church and by velcroing people to sermon-based small groups (Osborne 21). Rick Warren has the same strategy, and he mentions, “Small groups are the most effective way of closing the back door of your church” (327). With this approach, the church’s health, regardless of size, is strong and profound in its relationship with God and one another.

Jim Egli and Wei Wang share how small group discipleship can contribute significantly to the church’s growth. They share that if the small group leader spends more time praying, giving pastoral care to the members, focusing on outreach, and empowering the members to make disciples, it will lead to effective growth (Egli and Wang 145). When the small group uses sermon-based discussion guides in their regular meetings, this will not only help the leader to focus on the more important things but also will stir a deeper understanding of the recent sermon and allow every member of the group to reflect, understand, and practically apply the word of God in their everyday lives.

The biblical and theological foundation for small group discipleship pertains to one of the teachings of Jesus, the parable of the Sower (Matt. 13.18–23), and the account of the early church in Acts 2.42–47. The parable of the Sower talked about the seed that fell among the good soil. The church’s goal is to plant and nurture the disciples in good soil who have understood the word of God and become fruitful in many ways. A disciple can remain planted in good soil where they are cared for and guided in small groups. As the Lord transforms the disciple, the small group will be a place where they can share

their life and be safe through accountability. The fruitfulness of the disciple will be developed when his faith is nurtured well by the small group leader. The disciple will be given challenging tasks to do personal outreaches and share the Gospel with their loved ones and friends who are still lost. Then the disciple will be equipped to make other disciples. This will result in genuine fruitfulness in which Jesus will be pleased.

The account of the early church in Acts 2.42–47 shows the fundamental and organic life of how the church thrived during those times. The early church involved four major areas: apostolic teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. They met daily in their homes and applied all of these major areas that made them grow spiritually and numerically. The Lord was the one who added to their number those who were saved. The fellowship, the study of God’s word, prayer, and the sharing of the Gospel in the small group will impact the lives of every member and help expand the church.

The Contribution of Preaching to the Faith Development

The participants whose churches have grown into many satellite churches have one thing in common—a unified preaching and teaching series. Participant 2’s efficient preaching team regularly checks and develops impactful sermons. They select their content by choosing the best outline and illustrations. They have high qualifications for preachers, so they only have a few gifted people who do the sermons. Some of their satellite churches have no assigned preacher, so they videocast the sermon from the main church.

Participants 2 and 5 have a centralized preaching calendar developed by the pastoral council. They maintain the alignment of the sermon messages and topics to the vision and mission of the church. The topics were well-balanced and targeted all aspects

of Christianity. The topics involved the vertical (God) and horizontal (other people) relationships, selected books from the Old and New Testaments, narrative and didactic, and other themes that relate to the current issues of their congregation and society.

The effectiveness and impact of preaching can be determined if it is fully understood and applied by all church members. Making sermon series and sermon-based discussion guides for small groups can deepen the message of the weekly sermon. The discussion guides aim to facilitate a small group's deeper reflection and understanding of the word and its application to their daily lives. Sermon-based discussion guides were explained in the previous major finding.

Participants 5 and 8 shared the importance of preparing for an altar call ministry as the Spirit of God brings conviction to the people after the message is preached. Preachers were trained to do an altar call once the message called out to people for repentance and to surrender their lives to Jesus. These churches have developed Christ-centered preaching that whatever Scripture they preach will somehow lead to sharing the gospel. On the other hand, the altar call ministry provides an opportunity for church members longing for revival in their souls to recommit their lives to Jesus.

The whole worship experience from start to finish should consistently convey the message for the day. So, the worship team is aware of the sermon topic and will align the praise and worship songs. Participants 2 and 8 practice this method and find their sermon message more impactful to the congregation.

In my literature review, Larry Osborne shared about the velcroed growth or the sermon-based small group in their church. The main goal of the sermon-based small group is to Velcro the people to know the word of God that will help their spiritual

growth (Osborne 43). The sermon preached in last weekend's service challenges the congregation to study the passage more profoundly and apply it to their lives. The small group leader handles the guide during their weekly meetings.

Paul Vermeer has a study about the account of the Door Breakers which is one of the youngest and fastest-growing megachurches in Netherlands. His study focused on the impact of sermon delivery in their congregations. He described the sermons as relevant, in that every message relates to the people's felt needs empowers and encourages them and aims to facilitate spiritual growth (Vermeer 13). Their sermons also address authentic Christian living that a person should have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ (16). And lastly, their sermons are centralized towards the gospel. They lead people to consciously accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior of their lives (17). These kinds of sermons should be adapted by churches to allow people to grow deeper in their relationship with God.

The biblical and theological foundation for the contribution of preaching to the faith development of the small group derives from the account of Peter's sermon in Acts 2.14–42 and the early church civil issues in Acts 6.1–7. Peter's sermon delivered the gospel message to the people in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. The account relays that after Peter's sermon, the people were cut to the heart or were convicted (v. 37). Then Peter invited them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins (v. 38). And those who responded to the call received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Peter's sermon showed the importance of boldly preaching the gospel to the people. The people's response to the call for repentance resulted at a

beginning of a rightful relationship with Jesus. In that passage, a Spirit-empowered sermon added 3,000 souls to the church on that day.

Acts 6.1–7 is an account of the early church where they were having some issues in the food distribution for both Jewish and Gentile Christian widows. They delegated the issue to seven leaders and appointed them to handle the administrative affairs of the church. The apostles were able to focus on prayer and the ministry of the word (v. 4). This resulted in the spreading of the word of God to the community. The number of disciples increased rapidly (v. 7). One supporting passage is 2 Timothy 4.2, which instructs the pastor or the leader to preach the word and be prepared in and out of season. This passage shows the importance of preaching the word in any season of life. The preaching series fits into this biblical passage. In making a preaching series, a significant amount of time needed to prepare a message that will impact the congregation.

Relationship-based Assimilation of People

The assimilation of people in the multisite churches is motivated by relationships. All study participants shared the same relational approach to bringing people to the church. One participant called it a multi-anchoring approach. A church with a multi-anchoring approach for making people stick around can make the assimilation of people effective. A church should have a warm and welcoming environment where all kinds of people can enjoy staying a while. All church pastors and leaders build relationships with the new attendees. Building relationships becomes a culture. Relationships were built in the small groups and then widened by introducing the new members to the rest of the leaders and congregation. This made the new members stick around because they already had friendships inside the church.

The churches also have a membership process where everyone who wants to be a member undergoes orientation and signs a covenant commitment form. There are membership classes that they will attend to learn about the church and its roles as members. They have a member relations team who ushers people from belonging to becoming a full pledge member.

In my literature review, Randy Pope introduces connecting points in the church that would assimilate people effectively. The connecting points are the small groups (Pope & Pope ch.15). The small group in Perimeter church is where people are equipped with the word and empowered to share the gospel with other people. The church's discipleship curriculum caters to the spiritual growth of every small group member. These small groups challenge and motivate the members to evangelize and make Jesus disciples. Steve Murrell also has the same concept of assimilating people in Wiki church. They establish spiritual foundations for every assimilated believer to make their Christian lives victorious (Murrell 236).

Daniel Olson studied the effect of church friendships on churchgoers. From his survey of 762 attendees from five Baptist congregations, the number and quality of friendships within the congregation heavily influenced the churchgoers' selection choices (Olson 445). His study suggests that the longing for friendships plays an essential part in the choices of churchgoers as to where they will stay and commit. Although an impactful quality sermon is a better predictor, church friendship adds more glue for people to stick around.

The biblical and theological foundation for relationship-based assimilation of people into the church springs from one action of the Great Commission (Matt. 28.19),

namely baptism. Baptism in the NT refers to the admission of a new Christian into the church's fellowship. Baptism was a command by Jesus. As people enter into a relationship with Jesus, they are invited to be part of the church by publicly confessing their faith in Jesus. Moreover, this ordinance is sealed with prayer by stating the names of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit by the minister. The church receives the new members and equips them in small groups.

Intentional Community Engagement

Multisite churches have a holistic approach to engaging the culture and community. They intentionally engage all sectors of society. From the poor to the prosperous communities, from the campuses to the marketplaces, and to any institution where the Gospel has not been introduced, or non-believers stay. The multisite churches innovated bridge events that created an opportunity to share the Gospel. Participants 2, 3, 5, and 6 do bridge events like campus ministries and LIFE seminars for students. They also minister to the police and other government employees and offer life coaching. Participant 4 has a wide outreach ministry all over the Philippines. They offer feeding programs and life skills for the poorest of the poor, leading to long-term transformation. They offer relief, medical missions, and debriefing with the community affected by a calamity. Participant 3 innovates ways to engage people with particular social issues in the community. They partner with other churches on how to reach out and make disciples of marginalized people. These churches meet the people where they are. They spend time planning how to engage their community and culture.

Establishing a point of contact is one of the common approaches to engaging the community by the multisite churches. Because discipleship and evangelism are always

based on relationships, the point of contact is a often person who lives in that particular community or a family member. The point of contact will serve as an avenue for forming small groups.

In my literature review, Steve Murrell designed the first phase of the discipleship journey: engaging culture and community. They engage the community and culture through friendship bridges (Murrell 189). Their churches focus on engaging the unchurched or the unbelievers by establishing common ground. They want to develop a friendship with the goal of sharing the gospel. Moreover, they gather the respondents in small groups to establish their faith. Randy Pope's intentional church has outreach activities that include assessing the community's needs, providing services that will address the needs, and church planting (Pope ch.2). The goal of the intentional church targets community transformation.

The church leaders are focused externally and take their prompting from the community around them regarding their needs and opportunities. They seek ways to bless and serve the communities (McNeal 7). Alton Garrison of the Assemblies of God mentioned in an interview, "As church leaders, we long to see transformation in the lives of the people, our church, and our city. Our mission is incomplete until we have seen people's lives change (qtd. in Geiger et al. 78)."

The multisite church's primary purpose is to make more and better disciples by bringing the church closer to where the people are (Surratt et al., *Revolution* 17). The multisite churches are more evangelistic as compared to single-site churches. What drives these churches is not about a growth strategy but to fulfill the Great Commission. Rick Warren shares about catching fish on their terms. The heart of Saddleback's evangelism

strategy is: “We must be willing to catch fish on their terms” (Warren 195). George Barna shares that the reasons for the unchurched of attending church are their pressing needs like financial problems, personal health, and family issues—often dismissed by the church (55). In reaching the community, the church should be willing to do uncomfortable things to fish for people.

The biblical and theological foundation for intentional community engagement is the Great Commission which says believers need to GO and MAKE DISCIPLES (Matt. 28.19). Intentional community engagement requires Christians to go and meet the people where they are. Believers must find ways to share the gospel with them and make them disciples of Jesus. Jesus’s parable of the Sower (Matt. 13.18–23) says to plant seed on good soil that will produce a hundredfold harvest. The church has to find seekers who will be receptive to the word of God. To be faithful stewards of the gospel, believers need to plant the seeds of God’s word on good soil. There should be strategic planning and careful analysis of the target community before engaging because the gospel is too important to waste money, time, and energy on non-fruitful ways.

The apostle Paul has his strategy for engaging culture and community. In 1 Corinthians 9.19–22, he allowed himself to become like the people he was targeting to share the gospel. Whether they were Jew or Gentile, enslaved person or free, weak or strong, Paul became all things to all men so that by all possible means, he might save some. His approach is like what Jesus did in reaching out to people. Jesus reached out to tax collectors (Matt. 9.9–13 and Luke 19.1–10), witnessed to a Samaritan woman (John 4.1–26), a Pharisee (John 3.1–21), and all who were sick and poor. The models of Jesus

and the apostle Paul in engaging culture and community reveals how to be intentional by doing the uncomfortable to share the gospel with all people.

Intentional Leadership Development

Multisite churches have an intentional system of identifying, equipping, and empowering leaders. Participants 2 and 5 shared how they developed intentionality in disciple-making and developing servant leaders in their church. Even though participant 5 is a lead pastor, he continues to engage the unchurched and make disciples. He handles various small groups besides preaching and equipping leaders. His position was not an excuse to still do the Great Commission. These actions inspire another disciple to have the same intentionality in disciple-making. The church also holds discipleship and leadership conferences to further equip its people towards intentional discipleship. They regularly huddle with the leadership team to have updates and sustain that alignment towards a disciple-making culture.

Participants 2, 5, 6, and 7 have defined ways to identify potential leaders. They look for qualities of faithfulness, availability, initiative, teachability, and humility. They invite these potential leaders into a leadership journey where they will be equipped with skill sets, mentored towards a Christ-like servant leadership, and deployed to any specific ministry where the Lord has called them. Leadership development aims to train leaders to be faithful and committed servant leaders. The character and spiritual growth of the leaders are guided and mentored. The leaders give impartations to the potential leaders. Before the leaders are empowered and deployed, the church assures them that they are fully equipped to meet all challenges of the ministry.

The ministry challenges usually offered to the interns are handling a small group, going into a mission, leading a ministry group, and serving in a new congregation or satellite church where the servant leader's skills and giftings will be used. Participant 4 shared that he imparts to the potential leaders everything he has in his life and ministry. He mentors them with his life. A leader needs to develop areas of transformation from time to time as he continues to serve. The head, heart, and hands are essential areas of transformation that must be cultivated in the leader's life.

In my literature review, Steve Murrell supports leadership development in running multi-site churches. In his book *The Multiplication Challenge*, he shared the four stages of leadership development that he had implemented in Victory Church. The steps of identification, instruction, impartation, and internship are in sequential order of leadership development in the church (Murrell & Murrell 86). This serves as a clear and simple leadership journey for all identified potential leaders of their church. Moreover, this made an impact on their church's growth.

The multisite church supports the development of leadership in their churches. They use small groups to play the primary role in the training and development of leaders (Surratt et al., *Revolution* 68). Their approach to developing leaders in small groups is more relational than anything else. They develop according to the potential leader's point of view and check for any alignment of implicit and explicit values (70). They develop leaders by organizing teams that are specifically assigned to each campus. They develop a character of interdependency with co-leaders (72). Joshua Patterson in his dissertation states, "Leadership with generational impact and influence requires a steady pipeline for

identification, development, and empowerment. The leadership pipeline serves to multiply prepared local leaders and raise the leadership quotient at the campus” (56). It is essential to have a clear leadership journey or pipeline that would help develop leaders in the multisite church.

A study about factors and qualities of lay leadership influencing church growth states that the large category of relationships was the quality of being others-focused. These are consistent qualities exhibited by the small group leaders who express love and care for one another and the willingness to develop other leaders (Hansens). Love for one another and unity must be cultivated in the hearts of the leaders. This will promote a more efficient and effective service for the Lord. Usually, relational conflicts derail the mission of the church.

The biblical and theological foundation of leadership development is supported by Acts 6.1–7 (the choosing of the seven), 2 Timothy 2.2 (entrusted leadership), and Matthew 20.26–28 (servant leadership). In Acts 6.1–7, the apostles chose seven men full of faith and the Holy Spirit to lead the church’s administrative affairs. This proper delegation of authority resulted in a rapid increase in the number of disciples in Jerusalem. It requires wisdom and discernment to know who are the people that church leaders will identify as leaders that would join them to do the work of the Great Commission.

In 2 Timothy 2.2, Paul addresses Timothy to entrust reliable people capable of teaching or discipling people with all the teachings he has taught him. This passage talks about the importance of leadership equipping. The intentional disciple-making and all

Christian walk should be passed on to reliable people in the church to make disciples of others.

Jesus taught his disciples that leadership in the Kingdom is to be a servant of all (Matt. 20.26–28). This way is far different from the ways of the world. The church should make servant leaders who will serve the people and guide them to a faithful commitment to the Lord. Servant leaders are selfless in motives, and their intention is for the benefit of others and less of themselves. Servant leadership is the result of effective leadership development in the church.

An Organized System of Leadership and Financial Management.

Multisite churches centralize their funds to the main church. They have one leadership board that decides the administration and handling of the budget needs of every satellite connected to them. The goal of this is to make it sustainable and focus on disciple-making. Participants 2 and 5 have a precise gauge in transitioning to form new satellite churches. They gauge that to the number of active small groups in the area. They recognized a church as a satellite if it reaches more than 50 active small groups. If it is less than 50, it will still be an outreach. The main church provides all needs of the satellite churches in terms of equipment, workforce, building lease, purchases, training, and direction.

Participant 5 shared that it has a long-time partnership with every school in the community. Because their thrust is to reach the campus with the gospel, they partnered with the schools to hold LIFE seminars and coaching with the students. This will result in the formation of small groups in the school. Participants 3 and 8 partnered with other churches in engaging and discipling the community. Participant 7 partnered with

Perimeter church to receive discipleship training and provide financial support for their outreach ministry for the poor. Partnerships with other churches and organizations can help sustain and expand the work for the Kingdom.

The main church handles financial management. Participants 1 and 2 shared that all the receipts from the satellite churches go to the main church's account. Each satellite church submits its plan and budget for the succeeding year every year. The national board or council of pastors screens and approves the budget of the satellite churches. If there are any unbudgeted activities and needs of the satellite church, the campus pastor will present to the board a special budget, which will be subject to approval. The main church does internal and external auditing of every spent resource that the whole organization has made throughout the year to promote checks and balances within church management systems.

In my literature review, the multisite church plays a significant role in supporting this church management and expansion method. A multisite church is one church meeting in multiple locations. It shares a common vision, budget, leadership, and board (Surratt et al., *Revolution* 12). This approach works best for already growing churches like medium-sized (200–800) and megachurches (2,000 and up). The model has many variations depending on the current need of the church and community. The fulfillment of the Great Commission is the driving force for these churches to go multisite, and this is not a church growth strategy (14). The key to a successful transition to a multisite church is determined by knowing the calling and purpose of God as to what type of model is best suited to your context (21).

The campus or satellite pastor is the carrier of the church DNA; they will transfer it to the new campus (60). Regardless of distance and location, the church DNA formed from the main church should be replicated on its campuses. That is the vital role of the campus or satellite pastor. He works with a team who will facilitate all ministry fields of the new campus area. There is the discipleship director, worship director, kids and youth director, and the leadership of the multisite director (67). A campus pastor should be entirely submissive to the main church's vision and mission, have solid relational skills, be a team builder, have a pastoral heart, and be a flexible entrepreneur (66).

To effectively manage the finance of a multisite church, what is done effectively in the main church must be reproduced in the new campuses (D'Angelo and Stigile 25). The main church should provide central leaders to help the campus pastor build the new campus. There will be leaders for the creative arts, family ministry, youth and adult discipleship, volunteer connections, communications, finance, and information technology (27). Leadership team development is essential in setting up new campuses or satellites in multisite churches.

The biblical and theological foundation of this significant finding is supported by the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25.14–30) and by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3.5–15. The Parable of the Talents talks about the specific privileges and opportunities to serve in the kingdom of God. The disciples of Jesus should be faithful to the responsibilities given to them by God. Jesus entrusted the continued work for the kingdom by sharing the gospel with the world and making disciples of him. There should be natural fruitfulness and multiplication in the discipleship and outreach ministries of the church. The result of this hard labor will give pleasure and happiness to our Master.

Apostle Paul shared some principles of church growth in 1 Corinthians 3.5–15. He stressed that it is God who causes the growth of the church. The believers' role is to plant and water every seed planted in the hearts of the people entrusted to them. The expert builders of the church ensure quality service made of gold, silver, and precious stones until the coming of our Lord and Savior. On that Day, all of these works will be tested by fire. So, leaders must ensure that quality discipleship and church expansion should be made. There is no place for mediocrity in doing the work for God's kingdom.

Ministry Implications of the Findings

The implication of the findings to the ministry of Word International Ministries Taytay resulted in an improved and more intentional approach to discipleship. A discipleship movement has been created since the start of 2021. We had set a clear and simple church DNA that would define who we are and what we do. We reorganized the organizational structure that will fit our discipleship journey. We started equipping the core leaders with the current discipleship process, and they are already being deployed to start their small groups. We also have developed a leadership pipeline to allow the movement of potential leaders willing to be trained in discipleship.

Later on, in God's time, when he will cause growth in our congregations, we will be ready to open new congregations in a well-planned manner. When our small groups began to multiply and our leaders created teams to widen the ministry, we prayed and planned to open a satellite church nearby. We have started setting up systems for our ministry workflows, membership process, and financial systems.

The impact of this study on our church is producing a new unrelenting passion for reaching for the unchurched and improvement in our intentionality of the leaders to make

disciples who will make disciples of Jesus. We are expectant of the good things that God has in store for our church in the next five years. We need to keep praying and be led by the Holy Spirit in every move we make.

This study will inform our ministry's practice by doing regular discipleship training for lay people. I will constantly communicate the church's vision and the strategy that someday we will be one church in many locations. We will pray for the whole province of Rizal to be transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ and that our church will touch every city and town that has not yet been reached by the gospel.

Limitations of the Study

During data collection, I experienced some limitations of this study. This study is limited to only Filipino churches with multisite churches. Another limitation is that I could not meet some of the subjects due to a hectic schedule in their ministries. Some did not respond to my invitation to participate in this research. I think a relational connection is needed to establish an interview.

One limitation also is organizing a focus group discussion with those who are into multisite church strategy. Their schedules were fully booked, so I did the semi-structured interviews, but the good thing is that I was able to ask all three research questions with that group.

One difference I will make if I do this research again is that I will also invite some subjects who have multisite churches in other parts of the Philippines. This will widen the scope of the study in the Filipino context. Since our organization is based in all regions in our country, widening the scope of the study will make this discipleship contextually

relevant and valuable to many Filipino churches that want to thrive in their work for God's kingdom.

Regarding the instrumentation that I used, I found it adequate for doing qualitative research. However, I also want to venture into a combined quantitative and qualitative approach next time to make my research more reliable.

Still, this study can contribute more in general. More single site churches will still benefit from this study as long as they are willing to learn and understand the biblical way of contextual discipleship that leads to church growth of multisite churches.

Unexpected Observations

One unexpected observation during the interviews is the common approach in discipleship that is based on relationships. I understood discipleship as a task or program the church must fulfill. But, according to the participants, everything should be done on the basis of relationships because we are dealing with people's lives. The discipleship journey is about every stage of development of a person's faith and relationship with God. This has changed my paradigm regarding discipleship.

Another unexpected observation is that multisite is a means of achieving the Great Commission. This is not another church growth strategy. This extreme focus is on making disciples who will make disciples of Jesus. A multisite church is the response of the growing church brought by intentional and contextual discipleship.

Recommendations

My future recommendations for this study are to explore the intervention type on how a church transitions to becoming a multisite church in the Philippine context. What are the specific steps that the church took to transition into multisite? This intervention

can be done maybe with my current ministry context. That research will also benefit other churches that want to transition to multisite.

Another thing that I would like to recommend is the evaluation of the impact of preaching series and sermon-based small groups in multisite churches. I need to know the effectiveness of this method concerning the faith development of every participant in the church.

One more recommendation in the future is to have post-intervention research that will explore further developments of multisite churches in the Philippines. There is a need to assess the effectiveness of the multisite church strategy compared with the church planting strategy in the Philippines.

Postscript

My journey through this research project changed my perspective and paradigm in discipleship and church growth. While studying this research's biblical and theological foundations, I reflected on the word of God and let it renew my mind. There are so many things that I need to unlearn and some improvement in my ministry practice. This study changed my view of God's grand design for kingdom work.

Through this research project, I connected with pastors who have experienced intentional discipleship and church growth. I was inspired and motivated to do excellent work for the church and the Lord. Our church has already started the journey of more intentional and purposeful disciple-making. I pray that God will guide us through the process of change and keep us humble and teachable in every challenge we will face.

APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Introduction – Thank you very much for being part of this ministry research project focused on discovering best practices for implementing contextual discipleship that moved churches from single to multi-site churches. I would like to remind you that this interview will be recorded and secured in a storage device. Your identity will be anonymous to everyone but the researcher/interviewer. This interview will last no more than one (1) hour and will ask a series of questions and insert follow-up questions to support this interview further. The data gathered in this interview will be helpful to all small and medium-sized churches planning to expand their ministry to fulfill the Great Commission.

Research Question #1

What are the experiences of pastor/s in having contextual discipleship and multi-site church strategy?

1. Does your church have an official vision and mission statement? If so, I would like to hear your explanation for each statement.
2. What are the core values of your church?
3. Is there one standard of discipleship process in your church, or are there different pathways for different age groups? If so, please describe each.
4. Describe your small group discipleship.
5. What are the different forms of small groups in your church?
6. What is your approach to working with lay leaders in the discipleship area?

7. What is the impact of discipleship on the people's faith development?
8. What is the impact of discipleship on the vibrancy of worship?
9. What is the impact of discipleship on the volunteer workers?
10. What is the impact of discipleship on your church's work in the community?
11. What is the impact of preaching and teaching the Word to the congregation/s?
12. What did you feel about opening a new congregation/campus in response to a growing number of members?

Research Question #2

What is the context or situation of the churches involved that have typically influenced their experiences of contextual discipleship and multi-site strategy that leads to church growth?

13. Did your leaders show an intentional approach to making disciples?
14. What contributed to your leaders becoming more intentional about making disciples?
15. How did the small groups multiply in your church?
16. How did you decide to transition your church from a single site into a multi-site?

Appendix B

Focus Group Discussions Protocol and Questionnaire

Description

The participants of the Focus Group Discussion are a heterogeneous group of pastors or church planters representing their churches. There will be two groups for this instrument. One group comprises five (5) pastors or church planters with an effective discipleship process in their church and multi-site campuses or congregation. The other group shall consist of five (5) pastors or church planters with a working discipleship process and constitutes a single and medium-sized church. The focus group discussion is led by the researcher himself as the facilitator. The discussion will be done through an online Zoom conferencing app where it will be recorded that will serve as the notes. The facilitator or researcher will require every focus group member to open their video camera to see their reactions.

Ethical considerations

- Every individual has the right to refuse to participate in a focus group or stop the participation at any time. The focus group facilitator must respect this right.
- It is important to conduct focus groups in a manner that is comfortable for all participants so they can speak openly and honestly.
- No identifying information should be kept in the notes or final report.

Focus Group Discussion Guide

The facilitator will use the questionnaire below to describe the topic in this study. The discussion may contain follow-up or probing questions for the facilitator. The conversation should flow naturally, and the group members may raise some topics. The

facilitator should follow the lead of the group members as they raise some issues during the discussion. The facilitator should have the ability to respect the dignity and confidentiality of the participants. The facilitator should have good skills in listening in a non-judgmental and unbiased way.

Research Question #3

What are the best practices of the churches with regards to contextual discipleship that lead to a multi-site church?

1. How does your church engage the unchurched people?
2. How does your church assimilate new believers?
3. How did the long-time members respond to the discipleship process?
4. How does your church identify and develop leaders?
5. What equipping does the lead/senior pastor provide for the potential leaders?
6. How do you empower your lay leaders in preparation for opening a new congregation/campus?
7. How did you decide to open a new schedule of services in your church?
8. Have you partnered with other churches or organizations in opening your new congregation/campus? How did your church create and sustain the partnership?
9. How did your church manage the financial needs of your multi-site ministry?

Conducting a Focus Group Discussion

- The facilitator will open the focus group discussion with a prayer.
- The facilitator will greet every participant in the group and thank them for participating in this study.

- Communicate to the group that the discussion will end in an hour.
- Read the informed consent to the group and have them sign the letter.
- Emphasize the ethical considerations.
- Cover all the questions in the questionnaire provided and ensure that every group member will participate.
- Ask permission from the group for the recording of the meeting.
- Request every member to open their camera while the meeting is ongoing.
- Allow one person to speak at a time. Instruct the other members to mute while they are not yet turned to talk.
- End the meeting with a prayer.

Appendix C

Approval Letter

Date _____

Dear Pastor _____,

Thank you for your initial interest in this research project. I am writing a dissertation for a Doctor of Ministry degree through Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. The research is being conducted through a qualitative phenomenological study approach. I have identified five churches, yours included, that have experienced a contextual discipleship program that leads to church growth and also applied a multi-site strategy.

For the purpose of this study, each of the local churches:

- Has a discipleship process that guides the church in moving people toward intentional discipleship making.
- Has an average attendance of two hundred fifty or more.
- The church has had a growing multi-site ministry for at least five years.

Based on feedback through expert recommendations, I have determined that your ministry fits the above criteria. I would be grateful if you allow me the opportunity to interview you for further study.

Please be assured that the participants' identities and responses will be kept entirely confidential. I look forward to your response to this request. Feel free to respond to me through e-mail or phone with any questions.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mark Eduard Yu

Mobile no. 09228292247

Email address: mark.yu@asburyseminary.edu

Appendix D

Informed Consent Letter

DISCOVERING BEST PRACTICES OF CONTEXTUAL DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM LEADING TO CHURCH GROWTH OF MULTI-SITE CHURCHES:

Implementing Best Practices of Contextual Discipleship Program for WIN Churches in the Philippines.

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Mark Eduard Yu, a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you meet the criteria of being a senior pastor, a discipleship pastor or a church planter of your church who experienced contextual discipleship and multi-site church growth.

Suppose you agree to be in the study. In that case, the researcher will be asked to interview you via Zoom meeting online or face-to-face and join a focus group discussion with other participants who share the same experiences.

The interview will last no more than one (1) hour and will ask a series of questions and insert follow-up questions to support this interview further.

If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name.

The interview will be recorded through the Zoom app or a voice recorder, and the recorded files will be stored on a password-protected external hard drive.

After this dissertation, all recorded files will be completely deleted from the hard drive.

You will be given aliases or code name to cover your real identity.

Your contribution to this research will benefit many churches that want to thrive in their discipleship programs and church planting initiatives.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell Dr. Ellen Marmon, who can be reached at ellen.marmon@asburyseminary.edu. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Mark Eduard Yu at mark.yu@asburyseminary.edu.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you and want to be in the study. Do not sign the paper if you do not want to be in the study. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study, why it is being done, and what to do.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

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