

AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF MATTHEW 28:16-20 AND ITS IMPLICATIONS
FOR EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP IN A LOCAL CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

This work is titled, "An Exegetical Study of Matthew 28:16-20 and Its Implications for Effective Discipleship in a Local Church. This study discussed discipleship from Matthew 28:16-20. Discipleship leads to personal spiritual growth and maturity in Christ. Effective discipleship programmes brings about church growth through sound teaching of God's word. The research methodology used in this essay was historical-critical and exegetical method. The instrument used was interview which was conducted among some leaders and discipleship co-ordinators of some local churches. The findings revealed that disciple means learner and followers of Christ. Discipleship is capable of transforming life and makes it conform to the image of Christ. This can be achieved through faith in authority of Christ, baptism and observing all the teachings of Jesus Christ. Therefore, discipleship is a life impacting programme. The researcher recommended that evangelism should precede the discipleship programme. Those who believed in Jesus Christ should be discipled. Individuals should surrender himself for discipleship training. Christ's teachings should be the centre of discipleship programme. Discipleship programme makes every participant to be matured in Christ Jesus and leads to effective participation of every believer in church activities for the expansion God's kingdom.

5.2 CONCLUSION

It is believed that Jesus had successful ministry because he left eleven disciples who eventually turn the world upside down through whom the present generation have access to the gospel. They became an extension of Jesus' teaching by being obedient to the great commission. They were engrossed and faithful with the continuation of the preaching of the gospel as Jesus had commanded them in book of Mathew 28:16-20. Therefore, it is a challenge to those of us who are presently named after Christ to ensure that the gospel is being preached across the nations. Those who are saved must not be left alone they must be discipled. This will afford them the opportunity to grow into maturity in order for them to continue in the teaching of Christ so that they can also be an instrument of salvation to others.

Therefore, this generation is expected to take discipleship serious and make it a programme that impact life rather than filling books or doing it as “a must exercise.” The people in charge of this programme starting from the pastors of the churches, leaders and church members should be on their toes to ensure that the younger generation is well disciplined so that the future generation can still be linked with the trend of generation that fears God and experience revival in their days. But, if this generation should fail to take discipleship serious, our children may grow up without knowing Jesus and they may end up become accursed generation.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of this essay and its implication to the contemporary Christians in organizing effective discipleship, the researcher raises some suggestion and recommendations as far as this work is concern about organizing an effective discipleship programme in the local churches.

1. Mission should precedes the discipleship programme. People receive salvation through mission and the product of mission should be disciple according to how Jesus did it while on earth. Salvation is brought about by the sinner’s acceptance of the free gift of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins through faith alone. Discipleship concerns the believer’s response to the grace received by offering himself to God in submission, obedience, and sacrifices. In salvation, Christ paid the price; in discipleship, the believer pays the price. Therefore, salvation is free, but discipleship is costly. Because they are separate issues, there is no contradiction. Therefore, salvation and discipleship should be seen as two different things.

2. The Criteria for discipleship enrollment should be conversion with the evidence of repentance. Discipleship programme is not meant for the unsaved and those who are being preached to in order to be saved. The discipleship should be conducted for those who wanted to grow spiritually with the commitment to do whatever is being told to do to be mature in Christ Jesus. Growth should be the goal of every level of discipleship programme.

3. Every disciple must be taught what worship is all about. Proper understanding of the word “worship” would help all the discipleship programme participants to serve God better.

4. Members of the church should not be forced to participate in discipleship. Christian discipleship begins when you make an active choice to get to know Jesus better. By God’s grace, it is then accomplished in several ways:

- i. Individual can study His word daily and spend time alone with Him in prayer.
- ii. Individual can become a member of a Bible-teaching church fellowship
- iii. Individual can seek out the companionship of other Christian who are growing with Christ
- iv. Individual can participate in ministry and meet the needs of other believers
- v. Individual can share what you’re learning about Christ with others, just like Andrew, James, John, Luke, Mathew, Peter, Paul and all the original disciples did.

5. Every discipler should be someone who really had an encounter with Christ and that is ready to impact life not someone who is ready to teach discipleship booklet without life.

6. It is recommended that emphasis should be on sermons and teachings of Jesus in the discipleship programme with the instructions to observe all the teachings that Jesus commanded for spiritual growth.

7. Trust in God: contemporary Christians should put their trust in God for effective discipleship. Everyone should see Jesus as the great discipler not man.

8. Discipleship should always be conducted and handled spiritually by those who are growing spiritually who have salvation testimony

9. Pastor of every church should ensure that every church worker pass through the discipleship class. This will create opportunity for them to be matured spiritually and have passion for mission. Church pastor should also involve in discipleship programme.

10. Jesus multiply himself through discipleship, every disciple should ensure to do the same i.e. multiply yourself, you have been taught then you should be ready to teach others.