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**DISCIPLESHIP: A TOOL
FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH
IN A LOCAL CHURCH**

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ABSTRACT

This work is intended to stimulate spiritual awakening to the local church due to the use of discipleship programmes. It emphasises the need for the pastor to make deliberate attempt to entrench discipleship as part of the training programme of the church. With discipleship as a tool there will be a co-hersion in the body of the church towards an effective mission, evangelism and other ministries as the spirit will lead the church.

This study sees a biblical and theological importance of discipleship as it looks backwards to the old and the New testaments and to the modern movement of discipleship which started as programmes outside the church after world war II which has since gained recognition in the local church.

Discipleship is the tool that could be used to build stronger churches because most church conflicts can be averted when members can discover their potentials spiritually.

In addition to the list of recommended program, there are recommendations on effective discipleship and church growth.

CONCLUSION

By Conclusion of discipleship as a tool for spiritual growth the church will meet the her function as a body that equips her membership for the look of the ministry. The indwelling of the spirit every member and the corporate understanding of the presence of the gift or the Holy Spirit in the church will thereby be enhanced. In (1 Pet. 4:10) which says

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, Faithfully administering God's grace in its various form"(NIV)

This verse portrays the church as having potentials that should be of which when developed. This will enable members to acknowledge the gift that they have received by the Holy Spirit . The gift of the Holy Spirit according to this essay cannot be impacted but be discovered through discipleship training. When spiritual gifts are discovered it will call for service to one another within the church as a "faithful administrator of God's grace".

The effective pastor should be a discipler as revealed Biblically from the Old to the New testaments. The discipler's ministry is exemplified in the line of Abraham and his family, Moses and the children of Israel, Elijah and Elisha. In the New testament, Jesus Christ and the twelve Apostles, Paul and Timothy, Titus and Philemon. The pastor discipler should see his task of leadership as a builder of co-labourer in the ministry. The local church will have a common vision and the leadership will be able to carry through her vision with maximum understanding. Church split on relevance and the use of spiritual gift will reduce.

RECOMMENDATION

There should be a definite and planned programme of discipling of a new believer so that he will grow and be useful in the body of Christ. The older Christians who had not grown spiritually should also be disciplined unto maturity.

The following programmes are recommended for discipleship: Christ Indwelling Your Life, follow the master, serve the master, master life, experiencing God and enquirers handbook.

Christ in your life is a package of six lessons which can be used for follow-up of new converts. The programme can be used for six weeks taking one week at a time and also in a group. Another programme is follow the master. This is twelve-week study with a daily assignment which are to be taken one day at a time excepting Saturdays and Sundays when the Sunday school and church training materials are to be studied. The lessons contain how a Christian should live his daily life and strengthening "Christ Indwelling Your Life". This study could be used on one-to-one bases or in group meetings. Serve the master is built upon "Follow The Master" which teaches on Christian values. It also teaches self examination to allow for God to change whatever is needed to be changed. The focus is to make Christians more useful vessels of service to the Lord.

Two memory verses are to be learnt in a week. A twenty seven week study is masterlife. This is very extensive and it built on fellowship with God, other believers and how to relate to other people who do not know Jesus as their personal saviour. The study of God's word, Spiritual gifts, Witnessing and many other topics. The study may be expanded to fifty-four weeks if needed. The programme should strictly be done in a group. Experiencing God is about knowing and doing "The Will Of God" This is another group study course of thirteen weeks duration. The study is an indept look at the will of God especially as it relates to the local church. It will help individuals to know how God expects him to hear and respond to his voice and how God expect us to participate in the body of Christ. Inquirer's Handbook is used for those who are new believers. It

is very effective method in training new believers and incorporating them unto the life of the local church and preparing them for baptism. If the local church designs and includes these mentioned discipleship programme into the body of the church. It will be performing her function of making believers grow spiritually towards maturity in Jesus Christ.

The writer recommends discipleship to the church because it help the local church to know the difference between evangelism and disciplership. The church will not concrete on only making converts but also in growing them for membership. Also the writer recommends that discipleship be taken as a course in all training institution for pastors to enable them to readily apply this understanding to their ministry immediately.