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PAUL'S DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY:  
A MODEL FOR CHURCH GROWTH TODAY.

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BY  
JULIUS ADEDAYO OMOMOLA

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## ABSTRACT

This essay entitled, Paul's Discipleship Strategy: a model for Church Growth Today, is an attempt to examine church growth today in the light of the New Testament growth pattern. This is done by taking a closer look at discipleship as an integral part of Church growth using Paul's discipleship strategy as a model.

To this end, the task of the essay is introduced with regard to the challenge posed by Church growth, the neglected mission (discipleship) and how the essay seeks to accomplish its task. Clarification of key terms in addition to introducing the task becomes the focus of chapter one.

Paul, a major exponent of church growth in the early church, is considered in chapter two. The examination of his early life, call and ministry brings into limelight his sterling and emulating quality as a prototype in discipleship and church growth.

The basic strategy adopted by Paul for discipleship is x-rayed in chapter three. This is done with the clarification of what discipleship as a concept implies and the various dynamics involved in the process of discipleship.

The understanding of Church growth as a concept, its relationship with the Bible and the principles involved become the concern of the writer in chapter four. The last chapter of this essay examines the strategy employed by today's church in its growth. It then seeks to juxtapose today's church strategy with that of Paul and therefore projects Paul's discipleship strategy as a model for church growth today.

### C. Conclusion

God designed the Church for growth and to grow, it must be through God's own design. God, in establishing the Church, gave the mandate for its advancement. This mandate is the Great Commission. Discipleship as an integral part of the Great Commission is designed to be part of the accomplishment of God's purpose in the world. The reason for Church existence and the believers' relationship to Christ, "the reason for going anywhere, whether next door or across the ocean is to make disciples."<sup>21</sup> If multiplication of believers is considered to be one of the basic goals of discipleship, any church growth that is void of discipleship is "ingrown and deceptive."<sup>22</sup> A genuine and an effective church growth should therefore embrace discipleship as one of its integral components.

The position of the writer in this essay is a challenge to the modern day Church growth movement. It is a call to re-examine the channels of growth in today's church. The Church of today should rescind from gathering 'leaves' without 'fruits' in the name of Church growth. The fig tree that did that in the days of Christ remains an object of correction to this day (Mk. 11:12-14, 20-21).

There can be no church growth without a quantitative and a qualitative increase in members. The church of today seems to have been focussing on the quantitative increase for so long at the expense of the qualitative increase. It is time to

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<sup>21</sup>Robert E. Coleman, "Making Disciples," Faith and Renewal, 2, Sept/Oct, 1993, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup>Edgemon, "Evangelism and Discipleship," p. 539.

balance this increase. For the church to match on in its potency and power, Paul's admonition to Timothy cannot be ignored (II Tim. 2:2). What we have learned from the Lord and Paul through the Scriptures must be committed to faithful and reliable people who will pass on the torch.

If discipleship was a major factor of growth in the New Testament, Church growth today has no claim of New Testament pattern without discipleship. Paul, a chief exponent of the New Testament Church growth saw discipleship as indispensable to growth. To this end, he built on the discipleship foundations that Jesus laid. Be that as it may, the Church of today cannot but follow this pattern. In view of the afore-discussed views, it can be stated unequivocally that Paul's discipleship strategy is a model for Church growth today!