

THE CHALLENGE AND EFFECT OF DISCIPLESHIP IN REHOBOTH
ASSOCIATION IN RIVERS BAPTIST CONFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

This research work carried out in the challenge and effect of discipleship in Rehoboth Baptist association in Rivers Baptist Conference. The major thrust of Christian walk with God is growth, a congregation. Matured as individual members mature the scriptures describe the need to grow and mature spiritually. Many problems result when members fail to grow, some go back to the world, others cause strife because of ignorance or become stumbling block because of irregular attendance, worldliness or indifference. In order to achieve growth in the lives of church members and by implication the church, discipleship is to key. This was exactly what Jesus exemplified when he lived the life of a disciple maker and he gave the disciples the instruction to go do the same. Jesus chooses a few people and poured himself in to them. He preached to the multitudes, but He spent most of His time with His disciples however, things have changed, no one can trust the average believer even through he or she may so speaking in the tongues of men and that of angels. The so called Christian of today is often as arrogant as anyone else and cannot be trusted with money or opposite sex either the emphasis on discipleship today is programme based, whereas discipleship should be on relationship. Urbanization is a major problem confronting discipleship in Rehoboth Association with majority of church members lack basic understanding of discipleship, pastors alike placed mine emphasis on membership not discipleship. Today, pastors are more focused on large congregation, materialism and big church structure. The aim of this study is to examine the challenge and effect of discipleship in Rehoboth Baptist Association. The researcher consulted related literatures on the subject what have been said on the issue. On related literature review, the researcher discovered that discipleship is not a new concept but discipleship stated from the Old Testament. The Jew has discipleship programme from their cultural back ground. After examine what have been said on the study through questionnaires were administered to ten churches in the association. Information was gathered for data analysis, findings and discussion. The researcher found lack of basic knowledge on the discipleship among church member, other think that discipleship is a new concept in the body of Christ while most pastor do not have programme for their church about discipleship. The emphasis today is about large followed, mega church, *large population quantity not quality, urbanization is also major problem as a result of high cost of accommodation, feeding and transportation in the city that make most church members Sunday Sunday worshippers. Traffic is not also helping the matter most people spend hours in traffic after work makes it difficult to attend discipleship classes. It was therefore recommended that pastor should do more to teach and encourage members to go through discipleship programme, the issue should not be on certificate alone but transformational life.*

Conclusion

The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once wrote, "Before I learn to believe in their redeemer; more redeemed his disciples would have to look!"⁴ This outlook sums up the perspective of many Americans. They are leery and critical of Christianity because of Christians. Certainly, one could reasonably argue that society has

⁴Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 71

always held a disdain for Christians. But the malevolence directed toward Christians of the early church era was borne out of their fervent passion to live the gospel; not their insipid faith cloaked in hypocrisy. In fact, sociologist Rodney Stark illuminates the radical nature of early Christianity in his book *The Rise of Christianity*. Stark poignantly writes, "All questions concerning the rise of Christianity are one: How was it done? How did a tiny and obscure messianic movement from the edge of the Roman Empire dislodge classical paganism and become the dominant faith of Western civilization."⁵ The simple answer is that: the early church was invaded with the life of God, and believers lifted as authentic Christ-followers.

As remarkable as the early church was, the manifestation of God's power and fervent Christian behavior was never intended to be an aberration that enveloped design for His children, for all ages, has remained fixed - they are to reflect passionately the glories of the eternal creator.⁶ Christians do this by turning from the tugs of the world, the flesh and the devil; and by submitting to the work of the Holy Spirit so that they can be conformed into the image of Christ. Interestingly, this adaptation is real who we are. "Because' God has planted His own likeness in our personalities, it is our destiny be like Him."⁷ The apostle John and the eschatological hope that believers have in his first letter: "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we

⁵Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 3.

⁶God's Zeal for His Own Glory is Unmistakable (Habakkuk 2:14). We Were Created for His Glory (Isaiah 43:7; Ephesians 1:4-6); and We are Instructed to do all Things for His Glory: (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 10:31. Peter 2:12,4:11).

⁷Lawrence O. Richards, *Christian Education: Seeking to Become Like Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 21.

know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is."⁸
Christians are the image bearers of Christ.

This is the thrust of discipleship - to help mature the child of God, so that they can reflect the character of God. The divine template for this transformation is discipleship,⁹ as modeled by Jesus and the Apostle Paul. Although this was the means, not the directive for the church, the church has become complacent and fearful. Sadly, ecclesiastical leaders are unwilling to proclaim the conditions of discipleship as announced by Jesus. Author Greg Ogden writes,

What are the reasons for our reluctance? We are afraid that if we ask too much, people will stop coming to our churches. Our operating assumption is that people will flee to the nearby entertainment church if we ask them to give too much of themselves. So we start with a low bar and try to entice people by increments-of commitment, hoping that, we can raise the bar imperceptibly to the ultimate destination "of discipleship."¹⁰

Yet, when Life Way Research surveyed former church members, the top motivating factor reported by these individuals to return to church regularly was a desire "to become closer to God."¹¹ Moreover, the two most frequent reasons given by young people for staying in the church related to the role of the church in spiritual maturation: "Church was a vital, part of my relationship with God" (65 percent); and "I wanted the

⁸1 Jn.3:2

⁹The Primary Agent in Sanctification is God. Jesus Earned our Sanctification on for us (1 Corinthians 1:30); the Holy Spirit works within the Believer to Make them Holy (1 Peter 1:2 and to produce the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Yet the believer is to work in concert with God (Philippians2:12-13).

¹⁰Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 49-50.

¹¹<http://www.lifeway.com/Article/Article/LifeWay-Research-sVeys-formerly-churched-part-1-of-2> (accessed April 12,2012).

church to help guide my decisions in everyday life" (58 percent).¹² This data clearly suggests that setting the bar too high is not an impediment that spurns Christians.

Significantly, when the author of this paper surveyed Christians regarding discipleship, 30% reported that they desired to be discipled.¹³ Sadly, an equal number of Christians did not know what a disciple or discipleship was. Additionally, 78 % reported that they are unaware of a discipleship ministry in their church. What makes these statistics so alarming is this survey was given primarily to young people."¹⁴

"The Disciples were increasing in Number"¹⁵ That threatened the unity of the church. What is significant about this event is the manner in which leadership addressed the challenge. Rather than being distracted by this urgent and real need, the apostles selected responsible men to deal with the problem. In other words, they allowed able men (deacons) to do the work of ministry, so that they (the apostles; could devote themselves "to prayer and to the ministry of the word."¹⁶ Their action not only demonstrated excellent leadership principles, it established a vital priority for the church - prayer and ministering the word.

Of course, it must be noted that these same disciples were students of Jesus. How often was the Old Testament explained to them, and how often did they hear Jesus pray for them? They gleaned from the Master, and now they are implement what they

¹²<http://www.lifeway.com/ArticleView?storeId=10054&catalogId=i0001&langId=-1&article=LifeWay-Research-finds-reasons-18-to-22-year-olds-drop-out-of-church> (accessed' April 12, 2012).

¹³Interestingly, 27 % of the Respondents were "Unsure if they Wanted to be Disciple." this Number Corresponds Closely to the number of Respondents who did not know What discipleship is. Perhaps these Individuals would also want to be Disciple if the Church Explained the Biblical Importance.

¹⁴Ibid

¹⁵Acts 6:1

¹⁶Acts 6:4.

