

Implication of Discipleship on Spiritual Growth in the Church of Rwanda: Case of the Church of Gisozi Sector in Gasabo District

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Abstract: In Rwanda, the problem of moral crisis as abortions, drug addictions, alcoholism, sexual immorality, divorces, economic exploitation and crimes, people with mental disorders and suicides have steadily increased in recent years, and plague social relations. Christianity, having the mandate to relieve the burden of these problems when it strongly works in conformity with its orthodox principles, may not seem to meet the requirements for a healthy Christian life responding to the moral values expected from members, called Christians. This study aims to provide a vision for developing a Church Leadership in Rwanda for effective discipleship to recover its mission given by the Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples. According to Matthew 28 verse 19-20, Jesus has commanded His disciples to go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching to observe all things that Jesus has commanded His disciples, and promised to be with them always, even to the end of the age. The study objective was to assess the implication of discipleship on Spiritual Growth in the Church of Rwanda. The specific objectives were: - To assess the presence of any model of discipleship in the Church of Kigali city/Gasabo District/ Gisozi sector, leading to spiritual growth to maturity of Church members; - To assess any available discipleship initiative in use by the Church in Kigali city/Gasabo District/ Gisozi sector, focusing on spiritual growth of church members; - To assess effectiveness of any available applied discipleship initiative in respect with spiritual growth of church members. This study is descriptive and qualitative. Closed questionnaire was used to collect data for each dependent variable.

The population covered by the study was of three denominational Churches of Gisozi sector in Kigali city functioning in the period of April to June 2018. These are Presbyterian, Free Methodist and Pentecostal –ADEPR.

The results of the study showed that for the assessed denominations, there was not any discipleship model put in place by the church for spiritual growth of church members. We recommend the Rwandan Church Leaders to build a Leadership devoted to Jesus' disciple making for spiritual growth of Church members in order to fulfil his mission.

Keywords: spiritual growth, church members, Church Leaders, discipleship model.

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of Scriptures attests to the life of the early Church, and the witness of various Christian traditions over two thousand years that making Jesus' disciples is central to our understanding of salvation, mission, and ecclesiology. In the actual context, The Church must be restored to its original identity as a community of disciples who make disciples.

By making every effort to give our lives to the Lord Jesus as the outpouring of God's life into our lives on a daily basis, we more clearly reflect God's glory while becoming fully alive. As a result, discipleship is a lifelong, holistic reorientation that will have difficult consequences for our self-identity, community belonging, belief systems, and daily behavior. Within discipleship, the Church helps people to see Jesus clearly and to know His will for their lives. Discipleship equips Christians to follow Jesus in all aspects of life. The early church understood clearly that its foundation was the teaching of Jesus. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching... (Acts2:42). They used the framework of those teachings to evaluate every

new idea. Disciple follows Jesus and learns from Him. According to Tim Koster & all, (2014), discipleship requires absorbing a biblical belief, attitudes and character. Reading the Gospel reveals that following Jesus entails a complete transformation of one's lifestyle, worldview, and spiritual orientation. According to Paul, the apostle of Jesus, anyone who is in Christ is a new creation: everything old has passed away, and everything has become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

In the past, people received their basic life orientation from the family, school, and church. In the present time, images and celebrities through audio visual media are replacing families, schools, and church as arbiters of taste, value, and thought. The live of celebrities are providing templates for everything and the model to imitate. According to Obeng Sampson (2013), the Church of Jesus Christ have the mandate and means to influence culture and the sphere of reproduction of life. Culture spreads beliefs, values, fashions, and practices from one social group to another. Changing the world by making it better is only possible through accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, believing Him and abiding in His word. Becoming Jesus' disciple is the only way to get true life by which the person allows the Holy Spirit to transform his life and to change his worldview that become biblical through a renewed mind. The person becomes able to understand the will of God and to make decisions accordingly. While Christianity represents more than eighty percent of the adult's population in Rwanda, underlying beliefs, values and practices are rooted in a no Christian worldview. People enter in the Church or are recruited for Church membership, but are not made disciples of Jesus for spiritual growth.

Problem Statement

The world's population, and especially of the Africa continent are beset by many political, socio-economic, moral and religious problems. The moral crisis is a very challenging issue: abortions, child and spouse abuse, drug addition, alcoholism, sexual immorality, divorce, economic exploitation and crimes, growing number of people with mental disorders and suicides have steadily increased in recent years, and plague social relations. Rwanda population is also stricken without discrimination of religion.

In addition to these vices, many others such as ancestral worship, ritual killings, prostitution, cultism, manipulation, are widely practiced. The world needs a response to all these problems facing humanity. God's solution to all these problems is the Church established by Jesus Christ and build on Him. According to Tim Koster & all (2014), a healthy Church should include a special emphasis on discipleship toward spiritual growth of church members to maturity in response to all these challenging environments. The question is about how the church in Rwanda understands, obeys and uses the command of Jesus Christ to His servant to make disciples of all nations, teaching to observe all things He has commanded in order to face these existing issues in the right way.

Purpose and objectives of the Study

This study aims to provide a vision for developing church leadership in Rwanda for effective discipleship, the unique strategy for the church to achieve a remarkable numerical growth of Church members enough qualified to devote themselves to the Lord Jesus, abiding in Him and in His word, and contributing effectively in making others mature disciples for the kingdom of God.

The study objective was to assess the implication of discipleship on Spiritual Growth in the church of Rwanda.

Specific objectives were:

- I) To assess the presence of any model of discipleship leading Church members into spiritual growth in the Church of Kigali city/Gasabo District;
- II) To assess discipleship model/initiative in use by the Church, focusing spiritual growth of church members in Kigali city/Gasabo District;
- III) To assess effectiveness of any available applied discipleship initiative in respect with spiritual growth of church members.

Research questions

The research questions for this study are the following:

- (i) Does the Church in Rwanda in Gasabo District possess any discipleship model focusing spiritual growth of its members to maturity?

(ii) Does the church of Rwanda in Gasabo District use any relevant initiative focusing spiritual growth to maturity of its members in order to expend the gospel of Jesus Christ?

(iii) What is the effectiveness of the discipleship model/ initiative implemented by the Church of Rwanda in Gasabo District (if available) for the spiritual growth of its members?

Scope of the study

The study was conducted in the Protestant Church of Rwanda, in Kigali city, Gasabo District, Gisozi sector.

Significance of the study

First the results of the study would help me to understand more the right need of the Church leadership in Rwanda to fulfill the great commission.

Second, the results of the study would serve to inspire Church leaders to find out the existing gap in order to revise their strategic plans for effective accomplishment of the great commission.

Limitation and Delimitation of the study

The limitation of this study was the unavailability of data record about some dependent variables responding to the research objectives.

2. LITERATURE REVIEWS

On the first research question: Does the Church in Rwanda in Gasabo District possess any discipleship model focusing spiritual growth of its members to maturity?

There are no available researches published on the topic.

The Gospel of Marc chapter three and verse thirteen to fifteen, Jesus called to Him those He Himself wanted among His followers and appointed twelve to be with Him and that He might send them out to preach the Gospel, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demon. The Gospel of Mark Chapter one verse 14-15 tells us how Jesus started His ministry, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God in Galilee, saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." These twelve were Jesus' apostles chosen, empowered and sent out to fulfill a particular mission. They had received special instruction concerning the mystery of His person and role (Mark 4:10,11), and were permitted to share His ministry and authority. From this context, the concept of discipleship is about the process of making peoples of all nations disciples of Jesus Christ. The Gospel according to Luke chapter ten verse one reports that later Jesus sent out an additional seventy disciples.

The Gospel of Matthew chapter 28 verses 18-20, tells us that Jesus said to His disciples: "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Jesus promises to be with His disciples to the end of the age in order to enable them to fulfill His mission (R.C.Sproul, 2005). According to Nicolaas Marthunis (2009), the Church is failing to take discipleship seriously, even though it is the direct instruction of Jesus himself. Reasons he gives are that discipleship requires hard work together with spiritual wisdom and discernment, and that few people are qualified to take up the task. Jesus instructed His disciples to learn from Him (Matthew 11:29); to learn from the revelation that Jesus alone imparts. The life that Jesus desired for His disciples was His own life (Tasker, 1961).

Overview of these readings tells us that Jesus Christ is the model that church leadership focusing spiritual growth of its members shall imitate. Jesus' life-style, teaching and deeds are a model well shaped and demonstrate to His disciples very close to Him a good example we are recommended to follow.

About the second research question: does the church of Rwanda in Gasabo District uses any relevant initiative focusing spiritual growth to maturity of its members in order to expend the gospel of Jesus Christ? There are no available research reports about the subject.

The Epistles of the New Testament are very instructive initiatives focusing spiritual growth to maturity of Church members to be used by the Church leadership as materials for discipleship.

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul uses letters admonishing Timothy to resist false teaching and remain faithful to the true gospel. He give him a pattern to follow in these terms: You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lustra, which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me...But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed (2Timothy 3:10-15). Good teachings aim to patiently correct, rebuke and encourage his people constantly (2Timothy 4:2).

Concerning the third research question about the effectiveness of the discipleship model/initiative implemented by the church for the spiritual growth, there are no available research reports about the subject.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

Research methodology refers to the method by which data are gathered. It is the plan for the collect, measurement, and analysis of data in order to achieve the objective of a research. This chapter specifies the research design, target population, the sample size, and instrument to be used, reliability and validity, data collection procedures and data analysis. Furthermore, the researcher indicates ethical considerations of the study.

The research approach and design of this study were qualitative, and single unit- Church denominations.

The study was conducted in Gasabo District, in a sample of Protestant denominational Churches as target population.

The sample size was of three protestant Church denominations taken arbitrary: Presbyterian Church of Rwanda (EPR), Free Methodist Church of Rwanda (EMLR), and Pentecostal Church of Rwanda-ADEPR. We used a questionnaire and direct observation to collect data. Microsoft excel was used for data recording and analyze.

To ensure the content validity and reliability, the questionnaires were subjected to content validation through the assistance of an expert; the study questionnaires were pretested before use. The procedure of data collection used have three steps:

The first step was to design the questionnaires and doing pretest on field.

The second step was the visit of the Church office and meet the administrative person: elder or evangelist for data collection. The researcher informed briefly the people met about the intension of the research, asked for informed consent, and then requested to answer questions. The last step was to get back the answered questionnaires, do checking, arrange for data recording and analyze.

To analyze data for each variable related to the study objective, we used Microsoft excel for data recording and analyze.

For ethical considerations, the censor explained the respondent about the purpose of the study, suggesting him to freely respond the asked questions. The respondents were assured their responses provided will remain confidential, and the information given will serve only for the purpose of the study. The censor informed the respondent his free will to respond or not for any question causing discomforts, that his name will not be mentioned in the research to fully guarantee intimacy.

4. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Table: Summary of results on presence, use and effectiveness of any model of discipleship by the Church of Rwanda, leading to spiritual growth of members.

Names of indicators	Performance of each denominational Church in Gisozi sector.		
	EPR	EMLR	ADEPR
1. Presence of any model of discipleship in use by the Christian church in Gisozi sector, for spiritual growth of church members in the last five years	No	No	No
2. Available discipleship process in use by Christian protestant churches of Gisozi sector focusing spiritual growth of new church members in the last five years	No	No	No
3. Effectiveness of any applied discipleship initiative aimed at spiritual growth to maturity of church members in use by the Church of Rwanda in Gisozi sector.	There is not any discipleship model applied to produce any results for spiritual growth.		
Total of performance about the model of discipleship used by Rwanda Church to lead members into spiritual growth to maturity in Gisozi sector.	No performance achieved in the area of spiritual growth of Church members.		

The table above shows for each of the protestant denominational churches the following results:

- There is not any presence of a model of discipleship present for spiritual growth to maturity of members for Presbyterian Church, for Free Methodist Church, and for Pentecostal Church.
- There is not any discipleship process in use by the church focusing spiritual growth of church members for Presbyterian Church, for Free Methodist Church, and for Pentecostal Church.
- With not any applied discipleship initiative, there is not any available results to measure their effectiveness.

Implication of discipleship on spiritual growth in the church of Rwanda in Kigali city, Gisozi sector, is null for Presbyterian, Free Methodist, and Pentecostal-ADEPR respectively.

5. DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study show that the Church of Rwanda in Gisozi sector have not any discipleship model/initiative present focusing spiritual growth of their members for Presbyterian, Free Methodist, and Pentecost-ADEPR;

The Church of Rwanda in Gisozi sector have not any discipleship initiative in use focusing spiritual growth of church members for Presbyterian, Free Methodist, and Pentecost-ADEPR.

With the results of this study, we conclude that implication of discipleship on spiritual growth in the Church of Rwanda in Kigali city, Gasabo District, Gisozi sector is null.

The results of this study show the need for developing a model of discipleship for Rwanda church in actual context where, the lack of intentional Jesus focused disciple-making results in a loss of biblical values, nominalism in the church, many false teachings, and immaturity.

We recommend to Church Leaders the following:

- 1) to build a Church Leadership for making disciples of Jesus Christ;
- 2) to develop a strategic plan that includes making all nations disciples of Jesus Christ a priority of the Church Leadership in Rwanda;

Further investigations on making disciples of Jesus Christ are needed.

We suggest:

Removal of hindrances for spiritual growth of members in the Church of Jesus Christ in Rwanda for the achievement of Jesus' mission.

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QUESTIONNAIRES

Implication of Discipleship on Spiritual growth in the Church of Rwanda

Name of the censor: My name is

I am a resident of Gisozi sector, member of protestant church of Pentecost in Gasave Parish.

Motif of the visit: as a curious scholar, I am conducting a research on implication of discipleship for spiritual growth to maturity of members of the church in Rwanda. The church you are leading is among sample for study.

Please do not fell stirred to avoid any inconvenient question to you if it is.

Objective 1: To assess the presence of any model of discipleship leading church members to spiritual maturity for the time period of January 2013 to December 2017.

Q1. Ask the question how people become church membership? (Choose by ticking one among the two options below)

- a) by passing the test before baptism
- b) by personal repentance + passing the test before baptism

Q2. Do you have any discipleship process implemented in your church today? Yes No

If yes, tick in the position and ask the question 3; if no go to the question 4

Q3. What is the model in use in your church? (Make below a brief description of the model and check printed tool in use to confirm relevance; otherwise consider the answer after verification).

If the model is in use, ask the question 5

Q4. Do you have any model of program in use to grow up faithful life of your church member?

If yes, ask the question 5; if no, go to the questions of objective 2.

Q5. What is the model in use in your church? (Make below a brief description of the model and check printed tool in use to confirm relevance). If yes, ask the question 6 and seven.

Q6. Can you give me the qualification and position in the church of the responsible of this ministry (Christian life!)? If yes, note the qualification, his position and about his availability for church members.

Q7. Ask How that ministry work, make brief description below and a weekly schedule of attendance.

- Make an observation with time duration of session about attendance, bible study in small groups to encourage active participation of each person, praying with worship, praise and intercession.

- Be informed that the team leader (mentor) is trained on bible interpretation.

- Check availability of annual action plan with printed material in order to have a relevant efficient program.

Objective 2. To assess available discipleship initiative in use by the church focusing spiritual growth of members in the period of January 2013 to December 2017.

Q1. How do you teach believers to observe what Jesus had taught to His disciples?

What are means do you use to ascertain its implementation. Make note of your observations.

(If there is no means pointing particularly to making disciples of Jesus, you stop here).

Q2. Do you recommend joining bible study group focusing spiritual growth of church members to new converts after baptism? Yes No (If Yes, go to question 3 and 4 and 5ix. If no, go to next objective's questions).

Q3. Can you let me see the list of people formed the last six months? Observe and note their number. If no available, write: Not seen.

Q4. Can you tell me the qualification and position in the church of the persons in charge of mentorship of these Bible Study groups?

Q5 Ask to see the report of follow-up and evaluation of the bible study groups for the last six months and note comments and observations.

Objective 3. To assess effectiveness of applied discipleship process (if available) in respect with some characteristics of spiritual growth to maturity.

Ask the report of membership if available to assess names of local church members that joined the church in year 2006.

Q1. Among the list, we take a systematic random sampling of 50 persons to follow and check their presence after each five years, checking if promoted on the higher position or not.

(The follow up of the cohort is done for each five years up to now, with record of promotion in the position of responsibility in service ministry). The positions in consideration for ministry are following:

Church members recognized in the Church as: **Prophets; Evangelists; Pastors; Teachers.**

Q2. Have you implemented any training program focusing Evangelists?

Yes No If Yes, go to Q3; if no go to Q4.

Q3. Can you let me see the printed materials used in the mentioned training of evangelist?

If available, ask the action plan to be informed that it was planned (Note seen or not seen).

Q4. Ask to see the action plan of Sunday service teaching program available for each year in the last year 2017.

(Note seen or not seen). If seen, go to Q5 next; if not, go to Q6

Q5. Ask the list of preachers planned, and check in to observe if there are some preachers members of the local church from the cohort joining the church in year 2006 and record your observation).

Q6. Ask the action plan for doctrine teaching focusing believers led by a local evangelist in the last six months of year 2107. Answer yes if the list exists; otherwise, answer No.

Q7. Make record of drop-out and lost to follow among the cohort of new converted of 2006;

Ask the motif of observed drop-out if known and a system put in place and in implementation to recall them back.

Q8. Is there any intentional contribution of church members to bring new believers in the church?

Yes No If yes, go to Q9.

Q9. Can you give evidence of individual intentional contribution of church members to bring new believers in the church?

Yes No If yes, record evidence.