

# Disciplining Emerging Adults in Africa: An Andragogical Review

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## ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore effective methods of disciplining emerging adults in Africa through an andragogical lens, emphasizing developmental appropriateness and cultural sensitivity. It recognizes the complex relationship between the Bible, traditional African values, and the changing socioeconomic environment. By promoting independence and responsibility, the study seeks to address discipleship guided by adult learning concepts. The study employed a qualitative methodology that involved conducting semi-structured interviews with educators, parents, and young adults from diverse African communities. A study of relevant literature clarified methods that uphold andragogical principles such as collaboration, reverence for the educational process, and encouragement of critical reflection. The discussions revealed a conflict between the new participatory biblical models that empower young adults and the old-fashioned hierarchy of discipleship. Suggestions include integrating participatory dialogue into disciplinary frameworks, emphasizing mentorship and guidance over authoritarian methods, and leveraging technology to establish inclusive learning environments for moral development. By situating discipleship within the broader context of andragogy, the study contributes to scholarship by offering culturally aware approaches that balance respect for African tradition with the evolving needs of emerging adults. It emphasizes how important it is to reconsider discipleship as a cooperative process that fosters lifelong learning and responsible citizenship. This work will be expanded in subsequent research on the integration of African values with modern methods of community development and discipleship education.

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## INTRODUCTION

Disciplining emerging adults in Africa is an important and pressing task for many communities because they are the future leaders, intellectuals, and change-makers. This makes guidance a crucial and pressing responsibility for many communities. Therefore, engagement and mentorship are vital components of the process. It involves addressing the unique cultural, social, and spiritual challenges of young people in Africa. It requires tailoring the discipleship process echoed with their experiences and values on a continent rich with diverse traditions. This approach nurtures spiritual growth and helps emerging adults navigate modern complexities while staying true to their faith amidst influences like globalization and technology. Effective discipleship supports emerging adults in wrestling with identity, purpose, and community, and in integrating biblical teachings with culturally relevant practices. Understanding the

African context is crucial for sustainable discipleship, requiring engagement through language, stories, and communal values to inspire impactful faith living.

The need and impact of discipleship cannot be over-emphasized because Jesus is the model. The selection of the disciples represented a significant turning point in the ministry of Jesus Christ. His methodology was direct, but the outcomes were remarkable. In discussing this strategy David Elton Trueblood asserts,

It is not an overstatement to claim that Christ's choice to appoint the Twelve was among the pivotal decisions in history. There is no rationale to believe that the Gospel would have been known apart from this deliberately planned action. Given that Christ authored no text, he relied solely on the commitment of the selected group. Although not all of them comprehended his teachings or remained loyal, ultimately, the approach was effective.<sup>1</sup>

Making followers was not solely undertaken by Jesus; it is also mandated to continue through his Church. This is made abundantly clear in the Great Commission. Among the four action verbs detailed in Matthew 28:19-20 going, making disciples, baptizing, and teaching – only μαθητεύσατε (mathēteusate), meaning “make disciples,” stands out as the main verb positioned in the authoritative mood. The remaining three verbs function as deponents enhancing and clarifying the principal verb. This linguistic structure suggests that the primary core of Christianity's mandate is to make disciples. Going, baptizing, and teaching are auxiliary methods to achieve this objective.<sup>2</sup> However, it is essential not to limit the discussion to the Gospel of Matthew.

The equivalent accounts in the other gospels do not oppose the narrative found in Matthew; instead, they provide additional clarification concerning the methods employed. Mark 16:15-16 highlights that proclaiming the gospel is essential in the disciple-making process. The passages from Luke (Luke 24:47-48; Acts 1:8) introduce the element of “witnessing,” while the Gospel of John includes the aspect of “sending” (John 20:21). As Charles Peter Wagner held:

“Sending, going, preaching, and witnessing are all pre-soteriic (before salvation) activities; baptizing is con-soteriic (along with salvation but not producing salvation in a sacramentalism sense); and teaching is post-soteriic (after salvation). None are ends in themselves, but all relate to the goal of μαθητεύσατε (mathēteusate).”<sup>3</sup>

The verb form μαθητεύω (manthano), meaning “to learn,” appears merely twenty-five times in the New Testament, with only six instances found in the gospels, where its presence would be most anticipated as an indicator of discipleship. In contrast, the noun (μαθητής (mathētēs), which translates to “learner, student, pupil, apprentice, disciple,” is mentioned 264 times within the New Testament, solely within the gospels and the book of Acts. This term signifies a complete commitment to someone in the context of discipleship.<sup>4</sup>

The act of making disciples encompasses both evangelism and edification. A prevalent misunderstanding is to equate this endeavor solely with teaching and the ensuing spiritual development of another individual. However, the process of making disciples extends beyond merely winning individuals for Christ.<sup>5</sup> Achieving a biblical equilibrium is challenging. The Apostle Paul provides an actual description of discipleship in 2 Tim. 2:2 (NIV), stating, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” In the framework of the Great Commission in Matthew, the term disciples refers not to an end resulting in a finished product but rather to an ongoing process. The disciplining experience involves replicating in others what the Holy Spirit is cultivating within the discipler, enabling them to pass it on to a third generation.

The foremost illustration is Jesus and the Twelve. The Savior aimed for the disciples to reflect his image through the Church. Through their efforts and those of similar individuals, his ministry in the Spirit

<sup>1</sup> Elton Trueblood, *The Lord's Prayers* (Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965).

<sup>2</sup> George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Moody Publishers, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> C. Peter Wagner, “What Is Making Disciples,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 9 (1973): 285–93.

<sup>4</sup> Sarah Kohler and Tabea Clara Dietrich, “Potentials and Limitations of Educational Videos on YouTube for Science Communication,” *Frontiers in Communication* 6 (May 20, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2021.581302>.

<sup>5</sup> Wagner, “What Is Making Disciples.”

would be replicated in an ever-expanding radius. By utilizing this approach, the transmission of life from one individual to another, encompassing the broader world, was merely a matter of time dependent upon their dedication to Christ's directive.<sup>6</sup>

Consequently, the process of mentoring emerging adults in Africa should be regarded as essential and obligatory, rather than incidental and optional, within a ministry focused on these young individuals. The era of emphasizing programming and individual personalities should be regarded as obsolete, paving the way for a period of "peopleizing." At this juncture in the discourse, it is necessary to clarify additional terminology. The subsequent definitions proposed by Gary W. Kune are noteworthy:

A disciple is a follower of Christ who is maturing in alignment with Christ, producing results in evangelism, and engaging in follow-up efforts to maintain his/her results.<sup>7</sup>

Discipleship training involves the spiritual endeavor of fostering spiritual maturity and capacity for spiritual reproduction in the life of a Christian.<sup>8</sup>

A multiplier is a disciple who is equipping his/her spiritual offspring to replicate themselves.<sup>9</sup> A multiplier or discipler plays a significant role in the realm of discipleship training. Modern Africans have increasingly embraced a tendency towards individualism. Such an individualistic, self-reliant faith or solitary Christian practice is destined for failure. Therefore, everyone must be participating members of the community of God's people, where each individual maintains Christ-centered friendships, engages in mutual walks of faith, and contributes to one another's growth as disciples. This necessity has led to the concept of "disciplining," which refers to the obligation of disciples to support each other in their discipleship journey. Disciplining is a ministry to which every believer is summoned, involving a relationship with at least one individual akin to a "Paul" – a more mature believer who can provide spiritual mentorship to at least one "Timothy," a less experienced person in faith who can be guided; as well as one or two peers similar to "Barnabas," who encouraged Paul to inspire others.

The purpose of this study is to explore effective methods of disciplining emerging adults in Africa through an andragogical lens, emphasizing cultural sensitivity and developmental appropriateness, recognizing the dynamic interplay between traditional African values, the Bible and the changing socio-economic landscape. The research seeks to address discipleship guided by principles of adult learning, fostering autonomy and responsibility.

The outline comprises an exploration of lived experiences focusing on personal selective stories of emerging adults. Highlight how their unique cultural identity and transitions into adulthood influence their faith journey. Observations regarding assessing real-life interactions within discipleship programs and Church practices. Contextual understanding by way of analyzing the interplay between African spirituality, cultural heritage and Christian discipleship and also addressing the challenges of modernity, globalization and urbanization affecting discipleship dynamics. The research concludes on key themes such as mentorship, communal values, and identity formation, as well as strategies and examples in the Bible to transform emerging adults into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

## METHODOLOGY

The method used for this research is the qualitative approach. Andragogical theory was propounded by Malcolm Knowles. It is an approach to disciplining emerging adults. It emphasizes adult learning principles tailored to their unique developmental stage, highlighting self-directed learning, experiential engagement relevant to one's personal development. This leads one to seek for meaning and identity by integrating cultural and spiritual contexts into Christian discipleship efforts. A qualitative approach to the topic of disciplining emerging adults in Africa allows for an in-depth understanding of the learners' experiences, beliefs and cultural contexts. It emphasizes exploring their spiritual journeys and the social, cultural and theological influences on their discipleship process. The reason for this approach is that, it is best uniquely suited to uncover the depth and richness of disciplining practices in the African Church, acknowledging both the communal and individual aspects of spiritual development of emerging adults.

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Emerson Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism Revised edition* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 2013), 102.

<sup>7</sup> Gary W Kuhne, *The Dynamics of Personal Follow-Up* (Zondervan Publishing Company, 1975).

<sup>8</sup> Kuhne, *The Dynamics of Personal Follow-Up*.

<sup>9</sup> Kuhne, *The Dynamics of Personal Follow-Up*.

## THE DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING OF DISCIPLES MAKING (STRATEGIES)

Henrichsen proposes four fundamental procedures that are crucial in the process of disciplining young individuals.<sup>10</sup> First and foremost, disciplining emphasizes prioritizing principles over methods. This distinction is a matter of focus. In his interactions with the disciples in Luke Chapter 8, Christ consistently highlighted the principles of ministry without rigidly defining methods. Consequently, he motivated them to refrain from becoming overly reliant on traditional methodologies, encouraging openness to innovative and improved practices. Although change may seem daunting, if it is anchored in biblical principles, disciples will be receptive to new and inventive means of ministry. By exploring the rationale behind the actions, the trainee can gain insight and establish convictions. It is essential to allocate time for thorough discussions so that these Principles are interlaced within the framework of the disciple's comprehension.

Secondly, discipleship stresses the importance of placing the needs of others ahead of teaching methodologies. Jesus responded to both the apparent and genuine needs of the blind individual (John 9) and the Samaritan woman (John 4). He met them at their point of need for vision and water. Both individuals encountered salvation as they became ready to place their faith in him.

Numerous African Christians perceive training in a formal setting as an endeavor to master content and methods. According to Ted Warren Ward, a substantial segment of Christian education mirrors pedagogical approaches and customary strategies in secular institutions. "From Sunday school to seminary, these methodologies are modifications of long-standing Greek academic customs that were already firmly in place at the time of Christ."<sup>11</sup>

The Greek models of knowledge and education are in sharp contrast to the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus deliberately opted to repudiate these established frameworks: he purposefully did not establish a formal educational institution nor pursue financial support for an endowed academy to perpetuate his teachings. Rather, he chose a limited circle of disciples and cohabited with them, employing "teachable moments" to impart biblical principles and exemplify the core of his teachings by responding to their needs. This methodology should be replicated in Africa, whether within the context of a local church, a para-church entity, or a formal educational environment.

Thirdly, disciplining emphasizes the development of thought processes over skill acquisition. Henrichsen remarks, 'Jesus Christ places greater significance on who an individual is than on what they do.' The statement, "It is for one to be; it is for God to do," offers a straightforward yet profound insight.<sup>12</sup> The Savior intends to transform everyone's complete thought process.<sup>13</sup> For the Master to maintain absolute authority over their existence, they need to recognize his servant-like demeanor and dedication to his Father. This approach focuses on aligning one's life philosophy with the Scriptures, with subsequent alignment of convictions and perspectives. It is essential to acknowledge that the inconsistencies faced by emerging adults in Africa impede their ability to achieve complete stability. The flexibility and understanding of emerging adult workers in Africa will be persistently challenged.

The fourth guideline in disciplining stresses the importance of building a trusting relationship with God over simply imparting theoretical knowledge about God. This should not be interpreted as a dismissal of theology; instead, it is crucial to recognize theology as inherently practical. This division lacks biblical grounding. Rather, the focus should shift towards prioritizing experiential knowledge. Instruction in theology should be intimately related to real-life applications. The emphasis on cognitive understanding should be complemented by an emphasis on action. Human development is an integrative process; emerging adult leaders in Africa cannot isolate one dimension of the individuals with whom they interact. Enhancing cognitive skills, such as information retention, represents an inadequate objective for discipleship training.<sup>14</sup> When leaders of emerging adults possess a deep understanding and trust in God, their young followers are likely to embrace that belief. A review of the lives of prominent leaders such as Moses, Daniel, Elijah, Peter, and Paul reveal that their convictions and perspectives served as foundational elements in securing their esteemed positions within the biblical narrative.

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<sup>10</sup> Walter A Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born: Helping Others Grow to Maturity in Christ* (David C Cook, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Ted Warren Ward, "To Reform Christian Education: Six Criteria" (Unpublished paper, 1976), 1.

<sup>12</sup> Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*.

<sup>13</sup> Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born: Helping Others Grow to Maturity in Christ*.

<sup>14</sup> Ward, "To Reform Christian Education," 3.

## PHILOSOPHIES FOR DISCIPLING EMERGING ADULTS IN AFRICA

There exist nine principles that should be used in the process of discipleship. Initially, precise objectives must be established. To formulate clear aims and goals, the individual engaging with an emerging adult must first attain self-understanding. Socrates proclaimed, “Know thyself”; the Romans advised, “Control thyself”; and Christ instructed, “Deny thyself.” A follower of Christ may primarily focus on the latter commandment to “deny thyself” while neglecting the former two. Nonetheless, upon deeper reflection, the discerning disciple uncovers a biblical rationale for all three directives. Indeed, these three assertions unfold in a manner akin to a chain reaction. Self-regulation is unattainable for an individual who lacks self-awareness, as control requires an understanding of goals, motives, and abilities. The person who possesses self-knowledge is better equipped to exercise control and practice self-denial for personal development by (1) removing deficiencies that undermine his/her efficiency, and (2) leveraging advantages.<sup>15</sup>

As an individual becomes aware of his/her identity and clarifies personal priorities and values, guiding others toward achieving biblical objectives becomes considerably more straightforward. The development of a structured plan to guide an individual through the process of goal setting process can be beneficial. Factors such as the time commitment required, the nature of the relationship, the theological foundation, and the level of spiritual development will differ for each participant. Gary William Kuhne identifies four categories of relationships: (1) relationship one-to-one; (2) counseling one-to-one; (3) structured one-to-one; and (4) partnership one-to-one.<sup>16</sup>

The objective of the one-to-one relationship is fundamentally to foster relationships and cultivate a welcoming environment. The context is informal and may not inherently possess a spiritual essence. The main goal is to engage in quality interactions through sports, shared meals, gatherings, or participating in social and festive occasions, among other activities. Demonstrating the Christian lifestyle to the individual being mentored is essential (Mark 3:14; 1 Thess. 2:1-16).

The objective of individualized counseling is centered on character enhancement. Interaction with a person facilitates recognition of issues that need attention and resolution. This approach seeks to enable sustained spiritual growth. It represents a challenging yet vital aspect of ministry with young adults, particularly due to the communal lifestyle prevalent in African cultures. Promoting positive habits is essential in areas such as devotion, prayer, scripture memorization, and faith sharing. Contributing to others in this manner requires earning the right to be heard by investing time primarily with emerging adults and exemplifying a disciplined life.

The aim of a systematic one-to-one relationship is to create a basis firmly rooted in biblical principles within a person's life. This idea is frequently used interchangeably with the term follow-up. Kuhne proposes that the fundamental dogma, practical methods for spiritual growth, and outreach strategies should comprise the core content delivered. A specific time frame should be established to create a one-to-one partnership with the individual, which frequently represents the subsequent step in the discipleship progression.

The intention behind the partnership one-to-one relationship is to assure consistency in lifestyle and promote spiritual reproduction. This generally manifests itself at a later stage in the development of a new Christian. The individual undergoing discipleship has evolved into a self-motivated learner and has attained a degree of independence through spiritual maturation. As a result, the aspect of mutual edification becomes increasingly significant. Partnership one-to-one relationships tend to be less time-intensive compared to other forms and are frequently integrated with additional activities. This relationship is marked by joint prayer and scripture study, shared experiences, and reciprocal counsel. Although predominantly lacking in formal structure, it is essential for ongoing multiplication. It is relatively uncommon for high school students to reach this level of maturity; however, numerous university students and single emerging adults are prepared for such relationships in Africa. Nonetheless, a prominent question persists regarding the appropriate timing for utilizing each type of training relationship within the discipleship process. A comprehensive answer can be derived from examining the stages of growth in a maturing Christian's life. Subsequently, different types of relationships can be

<sup>15</sup> Buzzell Sidney Sid and Krug Mark Joseph, “*Couple to Couple: Discipleship in Duplicate*” (Dalla Theological Seminary, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Kuhne, *The Dynamics of Personal Follow-Up*.

aligned with these growth stages. John categorizes the stages of growth distinctly into three groups: children, young men, and fathers. “I am writing to you who are God’s children because your sins have been forgiven through Jesus. I am writing to you who are mature in the faith because you know Christ, who existed from the beginning. I am writing to you who are young in the faith because you have won your battle with the evil one.” (1 John 2: 12-13, NLT).

The children symbolize those who have recently embraced the faith. The main aim of a ministry focused on young adults who are new to Christianity is to cultivate a connection with God. A new Christian needs to cultivate this fundamental and profoundly significant spiritual connection. The secondary objective is to initiate meaningful engagement with fellow Christians. The assistance and protection provided by the Church, as the embodiment of Christ, are immensely beneficial. Consequently, this requires an initial approach that combines both a structured one-to-one method and a relational one-to-one method in ministry.

The young men stand in for the growing Christian population, whose needs differ from those of novices or unskilled believers. For them, two additional objectives are pertinent. They must adopt a stable lifestyle and carry out an effective outreach strategy. They need to learn more about evangelism, apologetics, and the canon. Working with a more seasoned follower will help them address vulnerable areas in their lives, so the one-on-one counseling relationship will be helpful. In terms of relational dynamics, the counseling one-to-one approach will predominate, while the methodical and relationship-based one-on-one approaches will become less prevalent as young Christians grow and develop their faith. Numerous young individuals raised within the Church will reach this point in their developmental journey, although significant variations will be noted among them.

The fathers, who are therefore fully formed Christians, will need very little in the way of relationship-based or structured one-on-one interaction. The needs at this stage are most effectively addressed through counseling one-to-one, which typically transitions into a partnership one-to-one dynamic.<sup>17</sup>

A caution for all emerging adult staff is to seek divine guidance through prayer in assessing the types of relationships and biblical ministry that are necessary for each individual. It is important to remain open to flexibility and to make adjustments when necessary.

**Secondly**, recruit individuals; and train collectively. “Jesus ascended into the hills and summoned those whom he chose, and they approached him. However, there was a noticeable decline in attention given to those beyond the twelve.<sup>18</sup> In the context of local church ministry, a discipleship-centered ministry philosophy is often not promoted unless there is a consistent and thriving ministry that engages the entire congregation. As previously mentioned, this represents a harsh reality that must be recognized, especially in the setting of African emerging adults.

It would be incorrect to assume that Jesus ignored the crowds, as Coleman points out. That was not the case. Jesus did everything within his capability and beyond to connect with the masses.”<sup>19</sup> But triumph is not achieved by the masses. African emerging adult laborers, along with both professional and nonprofit personnel, must prepare individuals for “works of service” (Eph. 4:12, NIV).

Only three of the twelve people the Lord chose had a significant influence on the Church. One was a traitor. There were twelve of them, each with a unique personality and background. Christ didn’t hang out with a group of “yes men.” A person was selected based on their unique contributions to the team. According to the biblical story, some people—like Matthew, the hated tax collector—were picked more for what they did to help others than for what they did for themselves. Their lives only became meaningful as they were molded by their interactions with one another.

Typically, discipleship training commences on a one-to-one level. As emerging adults mature in their faith, they should be grouped with a mature leader. A team or relational context will accomplish at least four objectives for them: (1) it establishes a supportive network of love and encouragement; (2) it fosters mutual instruction; (3) they hold one another accountable; (4) informally, some may mentor one or two peers.

<sup>17</sup> Robert E Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Baker Books, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*.

<sup>19</sup> Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*.

When building a successful team of disciples, love, humility, and a common vision become more and more important (1Pet 1:22; 1 John 3:14-18, 4:20-21; Phil 2:2-3). Christ cultivated a group of men who were committed to each other and to him. The detrimental effects of cliques are generally lessened by relational dynamics and attitude change.

Nevertheless, it is counterproductive to expend time or energy "preaching" against cliques; they serve as an important source of security for adolescents and adults alike. From a sociometric perspective, the cliques formed among emerging adults often mirror those of their parents. Appropriate attitudes must be manifested through actions. As they begin by ministering to one another, they will become aware of the needs of "significant" others as well as those who appear inconsequential (Acts 2:44-47; Rom 15:7; Gal 6:2; Eph 4:31-32; Heb 10:24-25; James 5:16).

**Third**, encourage independence from the leader while strengthening your reliance on the Lord. African women and men frequently try to control other people. There is a pervasive tendency toward paternalism. Emerging adults are followers of Christ, not of any one leader, and the person who has unintentionally created a power dynamic among them must never forget that. The instinct of adolescents to gravitate toward adults who listen, understand, and invest in themselves does not provide a solution. Instead, this dependency can become entrenched, leading the leader to either revel in a personal following of spiritually dependent individuals or feel unequipped to address the issue gracefully and dissolve the unhealthy attachment. Jesus Christ faced a similar challenge, as his disciples frequently relied heavily on him.

Bruce points out in his groundbreaking analysis of the formation of discipleship that the gospels as a whole only record thirty-four days of Christ's active ministry. Regarding what the Lord did with the rest of his life, Bruce suggests that Jesus probably spent most of his untold hours teaching and training his disciples. Their dependence on the God-man is; therefore, justified.

The practice of passing on disciples they have been mentoring to another person is a defining feature of the growing ministry of some emerging adult leaders in Africa. In this situation, the managerial concept of span of control—which states that a person can successfully supervise up to six people while upholding a high standard of performance—is pertinent. Six might be a suitable maximum in modern-day Africa if the savior had twelve people "reporting" to him. The emerging adult minister or worker who engages directly with three couples, one each from junior high, senior high school, and university already operating at full capacity according to management standards. Although the enthusiasm for engaging directly with young individuals is evident, it is essential to acknowledge that the capacity of one person to disciple is finite. Should the emerging adult minister strive to work intimately with too many individuals, the well-being of his or her own family may be compromised, which contradicts biblical principles.

**Fourth**, it is crucial to allow them sufficient autonomy for personal growth. Some emerging adult disciplers in Africa lack an adequate repository of knowledge to convey accurate biblical teachings and information to their disciples, thus relying heavily on their interpersonal skills.<sup>20</sup> Others have established a stringent, unyielding curriculum that every disciple is required to navigate. Both approaches are erroneous. The ministry is directed toward individuals, not automatons. Those working with emerging adults in Africa should be acutely aware of their development trajectories. Subsequently, an appropriate curriculum should be devised to facilitate optimal yet unhurried growth. Young individuals approach the discipler with varied backgrounds, differing repositories of knowledge, and distinct levels of interest. When formulating a tailored curriculum for a specific individual, it is essential to be prepared to either expedite or decelerate the process based on their current state and progression.

The need for the disciple to actively interact with the cognitive information being received is essential to the teaching-learning process. This suggests that the ultimate goals are not Bible study, conversations, outside readings, memorizing the text, or consuming media like audio recordings and videos on social media sites. Active engagement in the real world, including conversations with non-Christians and sharing one's faith, is crucial for the true internalization of truth. In his ministry with the twelve, Christ exemplified both the message and the methods, encouraged their involvement in the work while overseeing their efforts, and subsequently dispatched them first in pairs and eventually on their

<sup>20</sup> Kuhne, *The Dynamics of Personal Follow-Up*.

own. After emerging adults engage alongside disciples in teaching and evangelistic contexts, this practice will gradually become intrinsic to their very identity.<sup>21</sup> The disciple has the opportunity to experience failure through the experiential component. Failure of some kind is inevitable. The probability of failure must be addressed before it happens. Make it clear that there are two possible reactions to failure: determination and defeat. People who give in to defeat frequently do so because they fail to learn from their past mistakes. The other kind of person, on the other hand, evaluates the circumstances, forms positive habit patterns, and decides—with God's help—to not make the same mistakes twice.

The relationship between Paul and Timothy is a notable example of allowing a disciple the gift of autonomy. This young man was given the pastoral duties of the Church in Ephesus by Paul. Timothy made a lot of mistakes while using his freedom, but he also completed some tasks. Paul acknowledged that failure was a real possibility in his two epistles, First and Second Timothy. Without ignoring him, the discipler gave the young pastor the freedom to experiment. Paul constantly reaffirmed his love for Timothy while offering advice and encouragement. He remained alongside him until success and development were secured.<sup>22</sup> Emerging adults in Africa often fail to fully use their capabilities. Be there for them during the difficult stages of development.

**Fifth**, anticipate resistance as an integral aspect of development. Psychologists generally agree that adolescence often engenders some level of turmoil, whether manifest or latent, in the experiences of emerging adults. Nonetheless, according to a fundamental principle of social and personal growth, social learning theorists like Albert Bandura posit that there is a consistency in human developmental patterns and the learning process, suggesting that fundamental alterations or distinctive new stages in cognitive processes do not occur at any age. In contrast, developmental stage theorists such as Gesell, Freud, Erikson, and Piaget present differing perspectives.<sup>23</sup> Emerging adults in Africa often underutilize their capabilities. Accompany them through the challenging phases of development.

**Sixth**, expect resistance as a natural part of development. Most psychologists agree that emerging adults usually experience some kind of turmoil, whether overt or covert, during the transitional stage of adolescence. However, according to social learning theorists like Albert Bandura, significant shifts or new phases of cognitive development do not happen at any one age, and human developmental patterns and the learning process are continuous. This is a fundamental principle of social and personal development. On the other hand, developmental stage theorists such as Piaget, Erikson, Freud, and Gesell, offer differing perspectives.<sup>24</sup> While the statements made by psychologists regarding the necessities of adolescent development and the influence of anxiety require careful consideration, the Scriptures provide further insights.

“Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers<sup>1</sup> all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are. In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation. <sup>11</sup> All power to him forever! Amen. (1 Pet 5:8-11, NLT).

When spiritual development thrives, resistance is expected. When, a young person who appears to be committed is making significant progress in their spiritual development, it is often the case that their fervor diminishes. They may become indifferent toward Bible study, prayer, and outreach. The developing adult leader in Africa must acknowledge both the psychological and theological explanations behind these fluctuations. Due to both factors, especially because of the influence of malevolence, opposition should be anticipated.

John Dwight posits that numerous followers of God lead a life marked by defeat primarily because they cannot understand the character of their opponent and the kind of conflict that emerging adult face.

<sup>21</sup> D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion* (Wheaton, Ill., Tyndale House Publishers, 1970).

<sup>22</sup> Hyde Douglas, *Dedication and Leadership*, Third Edition (South Bend, 2004).

<sup>23</sup> Rolf E Muuss, “The Implications of Social Learning Theory for an Understanding of Adolescent Development,” *Adolescence* 11, no. 41 (1976): 61.

<sup>24</sup> Raymond B Cattell and Ivan H Scheier, “The Meaning and Measurement of Neuroticism and Anxiety.,” 1961.

The foe is often so skillfully and insidiously disguised that many are unaware of its presence. True victory cannot be achieved until there is an acknowledgment of the nature of the battle.<sup>25</sup>

African adolescent disciplers must comprehend the scriptural foundation regarding the nature and nuance of this adversary. It is essential to address this resistance to development before its emergence. In a conflict of supernatural magnitude, divine assistance is requisite. Examine Galatians 5:16-26; Ephesians 6:1-17; James 1:2-18; and 1 Peter 5:8-11. Examine the causes of opposition, the resources at their disposal, the significance of setbacks, and the certainty of God's strength. Anticipate that disciples may cause disappointment, and the discipler need not feel embarrassed to acknowledge any shortcomings on their part as well.

David Roper emphasizes the importance for emerging adult leaders in Africa to sustain a robust support system for themselves. Offer assistance as necessary. Engage in prayer for them, communicate through letters, and remain accessible for guidance.<sup>26</sup> However, one ought not to permit this dissent to diminish the standards of expectation. There may be elements of apathy or immature justification involved. Roper's concise warnings merit reiteration: "Do not hesitate to be stern with these individuals; those who belong to God will recover" (Mark 8:18, 33; 9:1-8, 19). In their mentoring approaches Jesus Christ and Paul, navigated a balance of compassion and assertiveness, combining gentleness with resoluteness.<sup>27</sup> (2 Thess. 2:7-12). Strive for that biblical equilibrium. These periods are pivotal for progress.

**Seventh**, bring them in contact with other gifted people. Often, specialized domains have a sophisticated referral system that enables general practitioners to use specialists' knowledge to improve patient or client care. Emerging adult leaders in Africa should not be afraid to use referrals to make connections with other knowledgeable Christians while mentoring young people. Other good men and women in the Church and related para-Church organizations, as well as the pastor and other members of the board of elders, can assist in this role.

Paul sent Epaphroditus and Timothy to the Church in Philippi (Phil 2:19–30). In verse 20, KJV, Paul claims that he had no one else like Timothy "who will naturally care for your state." (v. 20) Timothy had a significant contribution to make and demonstrated empathy for others. As he supported Paul in his ministry, Epaphroditus—who had been sent by and represented the Philippians—became homesick for them.

Arrogance and a form of narrow-mindedness lead workers among emerging adults in Africa to falter. Christ's body, the Church, constitutes a reliant entity. Each member of this body has a specific role that is meant to facilitate the progress of others. One must not fall into the error of neglecting to instruct disciples to receive assistance from the fellow men and women God has positioned around them for their enrichment and advancement. It requires a holistic understanding of God's knowledge. In reality, they are not solely your disciples. They belong to God. The leadership "principle" articulated in Philippians provides the appropriate perspective: "Let Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves" (Phil 2:3, NLT). The entirety of the educational environment should embody the unison characteristic of a genuine communal.<sup>28</sup>

**Eighth**, Moses prioritized nurturing a strong bond with Joshua, recognizing that he would not be the one to ultimately guide the people into the "Promised Land." With humility, Moses accepted that another leader would be chosen for this esteemed role. In response, he invested significant time and effort into mentoring Joshua, providing him with valuable guidance, encouragement, and instruction on the ways of God. Through this intentional relationship-building, Moses aimed to equip Joshua with the knowledge, skills, and spiritual maturity necessary to lead the people. (Ex. 24:13; 33:11; Deut. 3:28; 31:7-8, 23; 34:9). Joshua was equipped to assume leadership over God's people.

As a discipler shares their life with others and engages in collective Bible study. They will begin to open up about their struggles and vulnerabilities, creating a safe space for mutual support and growth. Nevertheless, some leaders within the African Church may repudiate this method, and it is important to acknowledge that an undue emphasis on experiential and confessional elements poses certain risks.

<sup>25</sup> J Dwight Pentecost, *Your Adversary, the Devil* (Kregel Publications, 1997).

<sup>26</sup> Roper David, *Making Disciples,* and Bob Smith, *When All Else Fails* (Waco, 1974).

<sup>27</sup> Roper David, *Making Disciples,* and Bob Smith, *When All Else Fails* .

<sup>28</sup> Ward, "To Reform Christian Education," 4.

However, a loving and discerning discipler will establish parameters regarding the depth and nature of sharing. Two domains where emerging adults often share imprudently are private familial matters and sexual experiences and difficulties. Despite this, numerous benefits arise from sharing in one another's problems (Gal. 6:2; James 5:16), thereby rendering such distribution highly advisable, except to these and other extents that may be regarded as inappropriate.

Lawrence Richards, in his commentary on the worth of sharing, notes:

Bearing one another's burdens entails two essential points: first, that we genuinely care about the troubles and needs of other believers, striving to support them through prayer, encouragement, and concern. Second, it highlights that believers' burdens are meant to be shared. The only way to know someone's needs is for them to communicate those to others. Thus, the phrase "one another" reveals the essence of love in action. Trusting love openly shares its needs, weaknesses, and burdens with others. Responsive love discards criticism and condemnation to show concern and care. Love encompasses the neighbor's burden as its own.<sup>29</sup>

African Christians are also called to "admonish one another" (Rom. 15:14). The term admonish signifies caution and instruction, generally implying "supporting through warning and rebuke." Love is demonstrated through acceptance (Rom. 15:7), honoring others (Rom. 12:10), and providing constructive criticism. Individuals have an inherent tendency to evade confrontation; however, authentic love articulates the truth compassionately and graciously (Eph. 4:15). As relationships develop, there are increasing chances to aid young individuals in self-evaluation. Young adults frequently grapple with significant feelings of guilt, insecurity, and anxiety. They require the presence of ministers and laypersons who can engage with them without trepidation, possessing the capacity to embrace and love those who have yet to fully accept or appreciate themselves.

The nurturing, loving concern of the believers assembled in communal bonds, alongside the scripture, constitutes the principal means through which God transforms believers from within. This potent divine influence necessitates that they experience life collectively as a novel community, one that is established and characterized by love.<sup>30</sup>

**Ninth**, prioritize roles over gifts. God prioritizes the individual's development over the specific spiritual gifts they may hold. His aspiration for every believer is to embody the likeness of Christ. The closer the emerging adult leader aligns with the Savior's character, the smaller the self-imposed pressure to identify or obsess over particular gifts. The qualities of a virtuous person are expressed more clearly in Scripture than the ability to hold a positive view of one's spiritual gifts. Paul did not instruct Timothy and Titus to look for individuals with particular spiritual gifts. Rather, they were to recognize those with spiritual qualifications. This does not aim to lessen the importance of gifts or their worth in the local Church. However, some individuals have become so confused about the idea of gifts that they have given up in frustration. This trend is particularly common among emerging adults in the African context.

An individual's role and the abilities they exercise within the local congregation are guided by the intention in addition will of God. Through the Holy Spirit, we are positioned in connection with others within the body of Christ. It is crucial to instruct emerging adults on how to discern their gifts and offer them service opportunities, enabling a precise identification process,<sup>31</sup> Trust in the Holy Spirit to operate within their lives. Offer them guidance and support. As they advance, assign roles with greater responsibilities. To cultivate reproducers, they need to engage in ministry with their contemporaries. Do not deprive them of the excitement that comes from introducing their friends to Christ. Grant them this opportunity, and they will commit to diligently nurturing that individual's spiritual development. Consequently, the concept of multiplication in ministry transforms from merely a discipleship catchphrase to a lived reality.

**Tenth**, acknowledge God's power to transform individuals. Similarly, Moses, who was guided by divine insight, Elijah also selected a fledgling individual to mentor as his replacement. A significant consideration aimed at emerging adult leaders is the fate of the youth upon his or her departure. Is their role one of demonstrating observing and following? Has spiritual authority been effectively passed on?

<sup>29</sup> Lawrence Richards, *Youth Ministry: Its Renewal in the Local Church* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1992).

<sup>30</sup> Richards, *Youth Ministry: Its Renewal in the Local Church*.

<sup>31</sup> Rick Yohn, *Discover Your Spiritual Gift and Use It* (Tyndale House Publishers, 1982).

Ultimately, God affects change in individuals, and we rely on Him. The Holy Spirit has come to transform individuals into the likeness of Christ; however, He also works through believers, serving as examples of divine reality.<sup>32</sup>

A highly significant resource in the ministry to emerging adults in Africa is an unwavering faith in God's capability to transform individuals. Adolescents, university attendees, and even young adults may encounter failures, exasperate leaders, and occasionally lead them to the brink of despair.<sup>33</sup> However, God is actively engaged. He will achieve what only He is capable of accomplishing. God does not summon laborers to attain success; instead, He invites them to be faithful.<sup>34</sup> African emerging adult workers must remain receptive to God to formulate a discipleship strategy that aligns with the specific needs of young individuals in Africa, as well as their aspirations and motivations. The approach outlined in this document is a proposed model with alternatives that can be modified to suit diverse contexts within Africa. Wiersbe notes that a ministry aimed at emerging adults must be biblical, characterized by being "personal rather than institutional, genuine rather than artificial, pragmatic rather than theoretical, innovative rather than contrived, bold rather than hesitant, engaged rather than isolated, and patient rather than immediate."<sup>35</sup>

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, the choice of the apostles signifies a pivotal moment in the ministry of Jesus Christ, shaping the foundations of the nascent Church and the ongoing path of discipleship. This strategic selection exemplifies Christ's method of investing in a small group, emphasizing depth over breadth, and highlights the essential role of each disciple in spreading his teachings. The Great Commission further solidifies the call to make disciples as a central responsibility of the Church in Africa, encouraging every believer to engage in the transformative journey of faith through evangelism, witnessing, and teaching. Discipleship is a multifaceted process that extends beyond mere instruction. It is about nurturing relationships, establishing a biblical value system, and fostering spiritual maturity. As we reflect on the principles outlined—majoring in personal growth, mentoring through relationships, and recognizing the need for dependence on the Holy Spirit—it becomes clear that effective discipleship requires intentionality, commitment, and a holistic approach to spiritual development. The responsibility lies not only with African Church leaders and workers but with every believer to embrace the call to make disciples. The Church in Africa is urged to cultivate an environment where faith is shared, lived, and multiplied, recognizing that through God's power and guidance for all. Let all commit to faithfully following Christ's example, understanding that one's individual journey ultimately contributes to a larger mission of transforming lives into Christ's likeness. Through authentic relationships, shared experiences, and steadfast reliance on the Holy Spirit, the Church in Africa can ensure that the legacy of discipleship continues to thrive in our African communities and beyond.

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<sup>32</sup> Leslie B Flynn, *19 Gifts of the Spirit* (David C Cook, 1994).

<sup>33</sup> Ray C Stedman, "Body Life. Glendale" (CA: Regal Books, 1972).

<sup>34</sup> Richard, *Perspective*, November 10, 1971.

<sup>35</sup> Warren Wendal Wiershe, "Biblical Basis of Youth Ministry," in *Youth Seminar* (Mihigan, 1973).

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