



THE GLORY JOURNAL

A BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION

Embracing the
Culture of Discipleship
in Perilous Times 1

Embracing the
Culture of Discipleship
in Perilous Times 2

Discipleship in the
Context of Spiritual
Family

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CHURCH

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EDITOR'S CORNER

We live in a time when knowledge seems to be abundant, yet transformation is not as common. Many Christians have biblical knowledge, but the ability to quote Scripture has never been the goal of the Christian life. Christ did not call us to acquire head knowledge. He called us to follow Him.

This edition invites us to revisit that call.

Across these pages, you will see a constant truth: discipleship is not a programme reserved for new converts, nor is it another church activity to add to your calendar. It is the lifelong process of becoming more like Christ. It shapes our convictions, reforms our character, influences our relationships, and prepares us to faithfully carry the gospel to the next generation (Matthew 28:19-20).

You will also notice another recurring theme. Genuine discipleship does not happen in isolation. God designed us to grow within the context of spiritual family, where we are taught, corrected, encouraged, challenged, and strengthened by one another. In a culture that increasingly celebrates independence, the Church must continue to uphold the truth that spiritual maturity is nurtured in community.

As you read this edition, I encourage you to resist the temptation to approach it as a collection of interesting articles. Instead, read it prayerfully and allow the questions raised in these pages to search your heart. Ask yourself not only what you know, but what your life is becoming. After all, the true evidence of discipleship is not the amount of truth we have heard, but the measure of that truth that has found expression in our lives (James 1:22).

It is my hope that this edition will do more than inform you. May it rekindle a fresh desire to follow Christ wholeheartedly, embrace the discipline of being shaped by His Word, and become the kind of disciple who faithfully makes other disciples.

Happy reading.

Ayandola Ayanleke
Chief Editor

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DISCIPLESHIP CULTURE

Discipleship used to be a culture in the Body of Christ, but it began to wane when focus drifted from spiritual growth to physical gatherings. The Christian life was no longer measured by how well believers lived, but by numbers. When that diversion came, there was a gradual decline in both the context and process of discipleship.

In the early Pentecostal Charismatic community of the 80s, being born again meant being solid in character and basic biblical principles. In Nigeria then, identifying as a Christian bore real weight, with virtues like honesty, integrity, and the fruit of the Spirit visibly evident. Unfortunately, that is no longer the case. We now have more Christians who are only believers in word and not in lifestyle.

However, discipleship is both content and context – you cannot maximise one while neglecting the other. In discipleship, you need both the word coming from the pulpit and the lifestyle of the people matching the standard of Jesus. Believers are to be given more to the content of the gospel as defined by Jesus in Matthew 28:18–20.

Matthew 28:18–20 KJV

(18) And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

(19) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

(20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

The Lord wants us to raise strong disciples, strong families, and strong churches of all nations. Moreover, it is a cycle – strong families are made from strong disciples, and strong families make strong churches.

Discipleship should be a global reality. The same message should make disciples everywhere, so disciples from different nations should be indistinguishable. Jesus, through the gospel, is making the world a global village. If the context and the content are the same, then the product will be the same. You cannot make disciples without doctrine. Therefore, Christians must be taught the doctrine to become disciples.



A DISCIPLE & A CONVERT

I'd like to stress at this juncture that there is a difference between a Christian convert and a disciple. You can be a convert without being a disciple. Discipleship requires a process of making, and the gospel is the tool for that making.

Teaching is not merely giving knowledge; it is instructing men in a way of life, showing them how to live. Without instruction, teaching is incomplete. That is one of the things gradually being edited out of today's Christianity: we have a lot of teaching without instruction, a lot of teaching without application, and a lot of teaching without a challenge to be conformed to the life of Christ. The Greek word for "teach" in Matthew 28 is *mathēteuó*, meaning to be a disciple, to enroll as a scholar, or to teach.

Every leader in an assembly needs to see the Lord's vision, rightly interpret it, and successfully pass it on, because warfare is mostly in the area of transmission. This is why Paul instructed Timothy to commit to faithful men what he had received (2 Timothy 2:2), and Timothy was qualified to do so precisely because of the depth of his discipleship under Paul. In the same vein, it is important as a disciple to capture the vision given to the set leadership. However, it is one thing to capture the vision, it is another to capture the spirit of the vision. The vision is both letter and spirit, and the actual work lies in capturing the spirit, which requires faithfulness. Great faithfulness is being demanded to capture the spirit of the vision.



Without the right spirit, you will be weak in grace and unable to command others with commensurate authority. Jesus first tries hearts before making grace rest on them. I have seen gifted people whose hearts became twisted, and grace did not rest on them. The Holy Ghost set them aside and raised up those whose hearts were right. The Spirit selects the successor.

I say this so that every developing leader will cultivate a meek heart. If a person's heart is not right, the Lord can bypass them and place grace on another. Timothy laboured well in following Paul, and as a result, stood out among the twelve men Paul had in Asia. Ranking is not based on intelligence, but by the Spirit. Timothy proved himself and entered a rank where he could commit apostolic grace to others. Actually, what made him exceptional was not just the letter but the spirit; he was not only a man of the word, but a man of the spirit. The New Testament work needs faithful men more than gifted men. Gifts have their place, but faithful stewards are those who carry the right spirit for the work.

Reliving my training me over the years, I understand what it means to carry the spirit of a work. For that spirit to rest, God first tries the heart, then gradually develops the gifts, then the authority. The first point of action is never the gift; it is the heart being prepared to carry the grace of Jesus.

The grace upon Timothy was the same grace upon Paul, but Paul was telling Timothy to be strong in it, because it is possible to be weak in a grace. That is why every New Testament work must be four generations deep. If our work is not built this way, we cannot extend it to the nations because, by the time we get there, it will already be weak.



For people like Hymenaeus and Alexander to have been corrupted under a man as thorough as Paul, they must have been deeply compromised in their heart. This shows us that heart matters are critical, the transactions, motivations, and pursuits of the heart determine everything else. A poorly shaped heart cannot sustain ministry or good stewardship; over time, it will be exposed.

When the Bible says Timothy was “likeminded” according to Philippians 2:20, what it means is that Timothy could interpret Paul’s mind, the mind of the vision. This is a heart connection, which is only possible when the heart is serving genuinely and not with eye service. Eye service is motivated by gain, not the right spirit. And it is revealed with time because the Lord sees the heart and rewards accordingly. Discipleship is, therefore, the transfer of the right spirit from generation to generation.

Service is part of the qualifications to carry authority. It takes a servant’s heart to receive transference of grace. This service is not serving Jesus abstractly but serving the men Jesus has placed authority upon. Timothy, for instance, naturally connected with and cared for the state of the Church, just as Paul carried the burden for churches under his apostolic oversight. You must have followed properly to arrive at this point. We need people with the right spirit, shaped properly for New Testament work, that is, those who carry the spirit of the work and can rightly interpret it with grace.

Every expression of truth is a demonstration of discipleship. Discipleship is phased by Jesus Christ from the beginning of our conversion until we come into fullness. A Christian must love the identity of being a disciple. Many want to become apostles but have not first been disciples. Yet being a disciple is one of the highest expressions of life a believer can attain on earth.

THE CONTEXT OF DISCIPLESHIP

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Discipleship is a long stretch, beginning from the name of the Holy Ghost till it climaxes in the name of the Father. This message of the kingdom is discipleship, and the context (the how) must be painted. Jesus taught discipleship in the context of a family, and in the New Testament, disciples live in communities. You cannot be a disciple alone; disciples are framed within the context of communities.

To return to Jesus' template, we must recover the context He used and adapt it to the 21st century. The easiest way to disciple is through church planting; that is why we have churches. Sadly, today, church planting has become synonymous with big buildings. The Church is not a building, it is a way of life, a community of believers, or a family. It is not a brand or an organisation. Treating it like a brand is as a result of the distorted patterns painted to a generation.

APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY IS TIED TO DISCIPLESHIP

Paul was an apostolic bishop and shepherd over the Philippian church and others. Not all the churches were planted by him directly, but they were planted under his apostolic oversight; many by leaders he had trained. The churches in Colosse are an example; they were planted by those who received the vision under Paul's oversight and went on to reproduce it in different territories. For every New Testament apostolic work, there is a spirit upon the work – an attitude, a dimension of grace that the Lord gives to the senior leadership of that work. That spirit must be reproduced. This is why we see terms like 'the spirit of David' or 'the spirit of Elijah' in the Scripture. It is the spirit resting upon the commission for the work, to be carried out under Jesus and the senior leadership.

Jesus Christ is the Master disciple-maker. Discipleship is the foundation of apostleship. We can see from Matthew 28:18–20 that there is a sending. However, there is a making before the sending. **YOU CANNOT SEND WHAT HAS NOT BEEN MADE.** True New Testament Christianity is fundamentally a sending expression. Jesus started His church with twelve core men, then seventy, then one hundred and twenty. If we subtract the twelve core men from the one hundred and twenty that were present at the Upper Room, we will get one hundred and eight, meaning Jesus had roughly that number of disciples alongside the 12 apostles. No one could have been part of the twelve by accident. In fact, no one could be present at the Upper Room accidentally. Only those who followed Jesus wholeheartedly were there, including some of the women like Joana who was the wife of a government official (Acts 1:13–15). The twelve, particularly, followed Him all through; it was a full time engagement for them.

We cannot define New Testament Christianity outside of discipleship. It is only in our time that we see ministers who have never been discipled becoming apostles. In the early days of the fathers of faith in Nigeria, every minister could be traced to a source, that is, the church could identify who raised them. It is sadly common now to see people who have never served emerge as ministers. But the truth is that true apostles must undergo discipleship. Apostolic authority and grace is not something you stumble upon. The Nigerian Churches in the 80s and 90s had high standards both in knowledge and conversation compared with mainstream Christianity today. The template and character of the New Testament Church eroded when men began to chase and esteem titles above conformity to God's image. For the average church today, pastoring is weak and shallow, because the overall vision of Christianity is unclear. Beyond that, not everyone truly desires to do ministry the way Jesus did because doing it His way attracts trouble to the flesh. A pastor who wants to 'succeed' in ministry is tempted to say what sells and do what is broadly acceptable to avoid controversy.



Think of a believer offended with Paul's description of the Galatian church as foolish (Galatians 3:1) only to hear Apostle James' outburst in James 4:4. Then, they leave for Apostle John's church and meet the same thoroughness of the Spirit. They could assume at first that Apostle John was simple, but when they hear the commandments reeled out regarding love standards, they would crumble because John's message was based on things of the beginning. Such carnal soul would get frustrated because John did not discuss things a natural man could relate with (marriage, workplace, finances) but spoke solely about the beginning.

The bottom line is that in the early church, one would have to stay in one church to remain a believer; there was no alternative standard. This is unlike today where there are many dilutions and a lack of standardisation. Every believer can find their preferred flavour of Christianity somewhere because there is a brand for every form of ungodly behaviour or nature in the soul. It is Satan who designed it that way to prevent believers from attaining fullness.

Discipleship is how Jesus is going to accomplish the project of building the mature Church. The message of the gospel is a discipleship message, but the context must be rightly applied for us to maximally receive it. We cannot do church the way it is done in some climes, where believers stroll in and out as they please, with no commitment to the Lord or to practical church life, no accountability, no thoroughness, and no oversight. These are the things that make up a discipleship community.

God designed the discipleship community for the saving of the soul.

THE CORE ESSENCE OF DISCIPLESHIP

Without discipleship, the soul will not be saved and believers will not grow. Christian growth is not just in knowledge but in lifestyle or conversation, and without discipleship in the context of community, we cannot have that. This is God's structure for raising His children; otherwise, we would have all automatically matured at new birth.

I can say, by God's grace, that I am a product of thorough discipleship. In less than three years at the church I grew up as a young believer, I had learned a lot that prepared me to bear responsibility. I recall a night my pastor was very tired and asked me to start prayers at our weekly vigil so he could take a nap. That task launched me into intercessory prayers; I didn't know how much I had learnt under him until that time. I could weave prayers with scriptures for hours and by daybreak when my Pastor woke, he was really impressed with me. I tell people, it is the word that fuels understanding. Disciples need to be properly taught so they know that you don't just pray in the Spirit without praying with understanding. Some people replace, praying with scriptural understanding with praying in tongues; they substitute the word with tongues to mask their inability to pray with words that flow from scriptural understanding. Praying in the Spirit should give more latitude to your prayer, but praying in understanding should be the foundation. All these should be taught to believers.

Discipleship is the only way to raise thorough believers. I did not attend a school of ministry, but I served a minister of the gospel and learned many things firsthand through observation, including church administration,

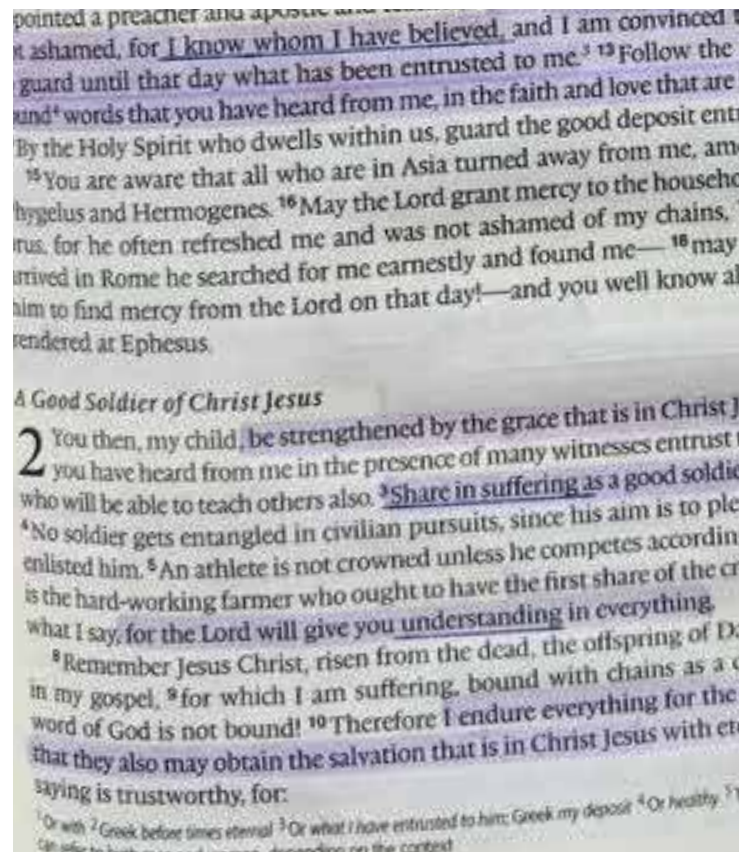
We also had evangelism and cleanings on Saturdays. And we had someone to supervise the work. That process shaped us more than we realised; it built accountability, discipline, and excellence in us. Discipleship deals with laziness.

In my church, then, you would see professionals in their late 30s and 40s hurriedly park their cars and run so they would not be late to hear the word, because they had a strong commitment to the faith. Today, you find people move in and out of church with no sense of reverence for God. You will see people loitering around and chatting while the Word is being preached. Many of the people who do this believe they have knowledge; they may even be able to preach but they lack the conversation.

Another problem I see today is having believers attend church meetings without jotters or writing devices. They must think they have become 'sons' of God who have the word written supernaturally in their hearts. There is something wrong with that kind of mentality. Because it is so easy to forget key insights during a ministration, it is ideal to always have a notepad to jot down the instructions, commandments, and directions given by the Spirit.

If we do not recover these cultures, the quality of men raised will further decline. This means we will have a generation with more knowledge but no life; people with head knowledge of everlasting life, yet flawed in integrity and honesty. As believers in the word of righteousness, there is no way we can 'sell' the message to others with flawed conversations and lifestyles despite the infallible nature of the word.

Discipleship must be intense and thorough to ensure that what was imparted is what comes out as the output.



Discipleship in the New Testament is not just the responsibility of church leadership; it is the culture of New Testament churches; it is the spirit of the work. It can start with the leaders, but it must extend to the congregation. Apostle Paul, who represented the church leadership at the time, transferred the work to Timothy, affirming that Timothy already had the spirit of service. Timothy successfully received from Paul, and then he committed it to faithful men who committed it to others. 'Faithful men' should be the state of every congregation; another word for 'faithful men' is brethren. Unfaithful or unreasonable men are men without faith (2 Thessalonians 3:2), and then there are wicked men. One can start from being unreasonable before being wicked. Alexander, for instance, started from being unreasonable and then became wicked because he could not submit himself to the spirit of the work properly. Paul classified this kind of believers as men who "have not faith". Faith, in this context, is spirit. It is what Timothy had, an unfeigned faith that moved from his grandmother, Lois, to his mother, Eunice, and then to him. That faith was the foundation of the faithfulness of heart that made it possible for him to carry the burden of the work to the next generation.

The men who fell did not start out being unreasonable; they warred with faith and did not surrender or yield themselves properly, so they became unreasonable and eventually wicked. This is what happened to Ananias and Sapphira. They struggled with the spirit of faith, and did not submit themselves to its operation within the apostles' doctrine. The apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers produced a community where everyone was shaped by the same conversation. The product is predictable for every believer who submits themselves to those four pillars. In this kind of assembly, everyone will be alike, making it easy to identify those who are not following doctrine through their fellowship. Inside fellowship is also submission to leadership. Anyone struggling with submission to authority has not fully received the doctrine because the spirit of submission is what the doctrine gives. Submission is not taught; it is caught. It is a spirit we come into contact with when we submit to doctrine.

When believers find it hard to submit to and honour their leaders and brethren, it means they have a problem with the message. It means they have not wholly received it. The leadership of the church is the physical representation of Jesus to the saints, and the hearts of the saints must be well connected to that leadership, not merely physically, but through a proper heart connection to them. When that connection is weak, it means the soul has not rightly received the message. The message gives supernatural grace to submit. When you do not receive the word with all readiness, you cannot fellowship properly; you will have restraints in your fellowship. You will have fears and things you will keep from the brethren, so fellowship will not be unfettered, open or smooth. Your heart is only open to fellowship when you have wholly received the message. Fellowship is a way to test progress in the message.

Discipleship must be corporately embraced. We cannot build church the way the former dispensations did, where much of the burden rested on the leaders alone. If we do that, we would be as limited as they are now. One of the cries of most of our present fathers in the faith is the search for the next generation; people to transfer some of the burden of their work to, but that is difficult because discipleship has been lost.

We have a generation that is not interested in discipleship but wants to enjoy the benefits of being associated with Jesus Christ; a generation of people always looking for preachers to validate them. For that reason, the discipline of following Jesus has been compromised.

The first-century churches were known as disciples (Acts 6:7), which signifies the kind of authority Jesus puts on the work. The New Testament church can only be vehicled in the context of discipleship. Once we lose the context, we will lose the purity of the message over time.



THE WINE AND ITS WINESKIN

Jesus said new wine must be put in new wineskins, meaning that the wineskin is as important as the wine. If the wineskin does not match up with the wine, the latter will spill. The wine, in this context, is the message; it is possible to waste the message. How do we waste the message? When we do not adorn the message.

Wastage occurs to the degree that our lives do not match up with the purity of the message. In every assembly, after a period of teaching or training, there is an expectation of output, just as it applies in every discipline or profession.

"For instance, after a medical student spends a specific number of years learning, he is expected to emerge as a medical doctor. If he doesn't, it means he did not complete the process of learning."

Every profession is a kind of discipleship programme; that is why it is called a discipline. In every profession, there is always content and context. For a medical student, for example, the context includes class attendance and eventually, clinicals.

The context is designed to shape a person into a disciple of the field. It is not possible to become a medical doctor by reading textbooks alone; the knowledge that will be shared by consultants in the class context is equally vital to the making of a thorough doctor. *Experience is learnt, not read; it comes by meeting and observing someone who has the experience, because some things are not written in black and white.* This same principle applies to the Church. The reason we have less sound teachers today is that training has been watered down. Content without context is not discipleship. Once we miss the context, we cannot have the spirit of the work.

Additionally, part of the training of a medical doctor demands that he is structured in a certain way. Not going through that discipline makes it impossible to treat patients properly. Much more than this, context matters in the Church; it is content without context that raises believers with no understanding of Christian conduct.

There are certain character estimates expected of a Christian, even at the most basic level. For instance, a Christian who is over five years in the faith should demonstrate virtues of love, compassion, forgiveness, forbearance, etc. When we do not see them, we must check both the content and the context. At times, the content may be pure but the context is porous. For example, it could be that the discipleship process does not include expectations and accountability. There is an expectation of what should be seen in a Christian after a period of time. Stephen, after seven years in the faith, became a deacon because both context and content were available in the early church. We have to get these values back.

There was a time in my discipleship process when the older believers in the faith, not the senior pastors, were the ones who taught us the basics. I got born again at JSS2 by someone who was in SSS2. The brother was at most 16, while I was 12, but he often came to my house for Bible study and prayers. He taught me the basics of the faith and basically disciplined me for three months. My best man also disciplined me for a while. We read scriptures and prayed together and even though he was my friend, I acknowledged that he was ahead of me. This implies that discipleship cannot be transferred if it rests on the hearts and shoulders of the leaders alone. Those who took the responsibility of discipling early converts were not the pastors but older believers in the faith. I believe that we should have teenagers who can disciple fellow teenagers.

I remember while growing up, reading through the Bible in a year was normal. People were hungry and trained with the discipline of Scripture, prayer, meditation, consistent meeting attendance, among other spiritual disciplines. Back then, it was difficult to lie to our leaders. Today, it is disheartening to see believers blatantly lie. This shows that there is a problem. Missing a meeting was almost a taboo; it was difficult to miss church meetings in spite of sickness because we were trained to deploy our faith for healing. And in cases where missing a church meeting was unavoidable, leaders were notified in advance. All these disciplines must be restored if we want to build properly.

While some assemblies have content and are lacking context, some don't even have either. For any true New Testament Assembly, the wine and the wineskin must be intact. When context is not strong in an assembly, it means the products will be weak. I believe that when a believer has stayed in a New Testament assembly for a while, certain works of the flesh like lying should be laid aside, and in case they appear, repentance should be instant, not just secretly confessed to the Holy Spirit alone. Some will lie and go for days without repentance; if that continues, the heart will become hardened, fellowship insincere, and the message contaminated rather than adorned. Normally, there are certain things that should not be found in a believer's life after a while because discipleship arrests activities of darkness.



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ESSENTIAL TRAITS OF A BELIEVER RESPONDING TO SOUND DOCTRINE

- A sense of responsibility: After a believer has followed doctrine for a while, we should start seeing a growing sense of responsibility. They should be reliable, such that when they are given an instruction, they carry it out without making excuses.
- Honesty and transparency: A believer should not omit things deliberately or tell lies. As believers, when we sin, our conscience should prick us; we should not be at peace until we have repented of it. And when challenged by our leaders, we should easily open up.
- The ability to communicate your faith: This should not diminish as knowledge grows. In fact, being taught the word of righteousness should be an advantage; it should empower and embolden you to communicate your faith to unbelievers and to Christians who are not serious. No one should cross your path in a week without being ministered to.
- A consistent devotional life: Once you are born again, personal devotion: worship, prayer, and reading of scriptures, is a daily necessity. It is a sign of spiritual sickness if a believer goes for weeks without praying, yet remains unbothered in their spirit.
- A change of company: After translating from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, the close companions of a believer should be serious Christians in the church. Former unbelieving friends should be completely cut off or at best no longer be in your close circle; they should now become recipients of the new faith you have received.
- A culture of respect and honour for brethren in Christ: Believers should be taught to honour another another. As young Christians, we were taught to address one another as “brothers” and “sisters” which was an act of honour – a way of receiving and giving grace. It was also a form of caution. For instance, it is difficult to insult someone you call ‘sister’. Even when you are angry, that measure of respect serves as a restraint.
- A culture of service in the church: A few months after being born again and joining a church, a new convert should enroll in the believers’ class and, upon completion, join a unit and begin active service. Service in church contributes to your spiritual growth, aides integration, and is a way to express love for God. Serving is also a major way God blesses us even in the natural.
- Soul winning: After following faithfully for a while, it is expected that a believer bears fruits; that is, souls won for Christ and brought to church to be established.

ESSENTIAL TRAITS OF A BELIEVER RESPONDING TO SOUND DOCTRINE

- Giving: Believers are to give, first to their pastors, and then to the necessities of the saints. We are never to come before God empty-handed. Tithes and offerings should be a major emphasis for a Christian. Then, we must also watch out for fellow believers and be quick to help a believer in need. That is not only the responsibility of leaders, it is the responsibility of the saints as well. When we were growing up as young Christians, most of our pastors back then were full-time pastors so we saw it as our responsibility to ensure they did not lack anything because they were serving us. Some had good jobs they forfeited for the work of ministry, so we saw taking care of them as our responsibility. Even though full-time ministry was the call of God on their lives, making sure they did not suffer was a way of appreciating them and receiving God's blessing. I believe this was what brought pure prosperity message into the Church before it got hijacked. The prosperity message was initially a means of empowerment; you could only be a source of material blessing if you had resources. People without resources received resources by faith to attend to needs in the church, and had additional resources for themselves. This culture of faith prevailed at the time, and although some have described it as archaic today; we should still have these expressions in our assemblies.
- Discovering your purpose in God. After a while of following faithfully, a believer is meant to discover their purpose and calling. God has a peculiar purpose for everyone besides the general purpose of being conformed to the image of the Son. So, as believers, we must seek to know our purpose and be equipped to carry it out.

On a broad scale, ministry is divided into the fivefold ministries as described in Ephesians 4:11 and the ones described in Romans 12 – which is where most people begin. There is a head-body gift and a body-body gift. Ministry includes teaching, but it also includes driving or cooking for ministers and brethren, ushering, drumming, etc. We must all see ourselves as ministers and see that our walk with God is tied to our service.

Whatever your ministry is, you should be faithful in carrying it out. When you are not doing your ministry properly, we can trace it back to your personal walk with God, because if you kept fellowship, the Holy Spirit would have convicted you. This faithfulness even extends to your conduct at your secular workplace.

Your heart for service is seen in how you handle everything God has placed in your hands; no matter how trivial you think it is. You cannot be a servant as described in the book of Revelation and not be faithful in your unit of service. A person who is not faithful and reliable in handling the church camera cannot handle the Seven Spirit of God. It is to the one who has been faithful in little that more will be added.

All that has been highlighted above are things that were once the culture of the church but eroded over time. They also fall within the discipleship context of the milk of Christ. When we are building in the kingdom environment, we must make sure all the contexts are in place. We must make sure we are teaching with context, so people can use what they are hearing and be established in it. The right church environment is the context.

And the easiest way to disciple is for people to be willing to be discipled, led, and trained. However, even though many church leaders are now pastoring a generation that does not like correction, we cannot afford to give up on discipleship.

We should never get to the point where we feel we cannot disciple the saints or that the standards cannot be raised. If we ever get to that point, Jesus will count us as not faithful enough.

May that not happen to us.

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DISCIPLESHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF SPIRITUAL FAMILY

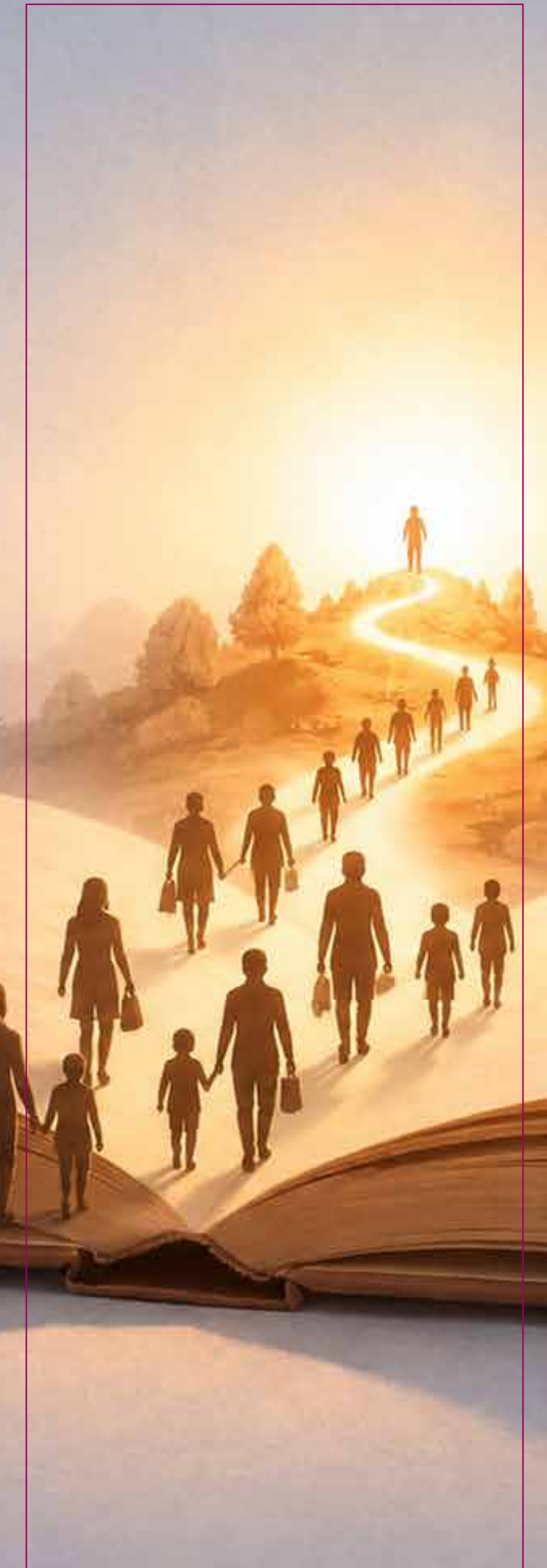


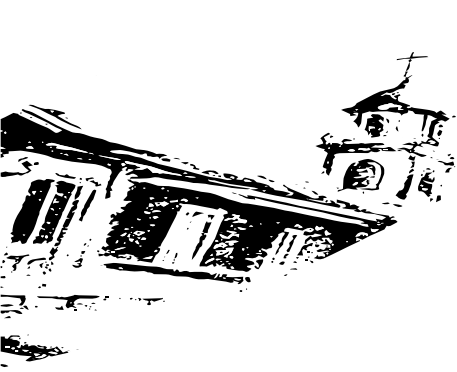
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The core of a family relationship is discipline. The word “disciple” means a disciplined follower. Discipleship is a process of training that involves correction and shaping of character, and it is only possible when the church is seen as a family. A church loses its discipleship thrust when its members no longer function as a spiritual family, but as a service centre where people simply attend to fellowship and leave. God structured the church as a family, and it is meant to operate that way (Psalm 68:6).

God is a family Man. The concept of family is not only on earth but also in heaven (Ephesians 3:14-15). If you do not believe in church and family, you cannot claim to believe in God. You prosper in God when He brings you into a family, so when you rebel against family life, you will find yourself in a dry land (Psalm 68:6).





Every believer should identify with a local assembly from the new birth; it is how they are able to follow the pattern the Lord has set. Being “added” to a church means becoming a functional part of that church family (Ephesians 2:19–22). Also, being in a local assembly facilitates being built together with other saints so as to become God’s dwelling place. We cannot fully understand the concept of discipleship if we do not see the church as a family. Otherwise, we will either offend or be offended. Discipleship is a major outflow of family life. The church protects and immunizes us from offence, bitterness, and the things that knock people off course.

Believers should not attack the church because of the imperfections of its members. The church is a healing centre, a place where values are transferred, and a place of discipline and training. Therefore, a family where correction is not made a lifestyle is a weak family. Correction makes us better (Proverbs 12:1 NKJV; Proverbs 22:6 NKJV). It ensures that values do not diminish in our community but increase, because values should not be diminishing among us.

Then, after being trained and equipped in a local assembly, believers can be sent forth into the earth.

All families have different rules and structures, and visitors must follow the structure of the family when they visit. As a believer, even if you are in a church for a short period, immerse yourself fully in that church family and embrace their culture.

FUNCTIONS OF THE SPIRITUAL FAMILY

1. Provision of spiritual food: Just like the natural family’s responsibility is to provide food, the church should also be a house of bread. It is very important that the church provides spiritual meals (Matthew 24:45). Spiritual food includes the ministry of the word of God. Every believer must examine the quality of the spiritual food supplied in the church they attend. The church is a feeding centre, and saints must be fed to remain healthy. Just as a mother is concerned when a child is not feeding well, church leaders should also be concerned when a saint is not feeding well. In return, saints should not be surprised or offended when their leaders and brethren express concern about them not feeding as they should. For instance, a brother or sister may be confronted and encouraged when they are not listening to messages or reading the Word.

2. Provision of shelter: The church is a covering for believers. If believers are not added to or committed to a local assembly, they risk exposure to wicked spirits. Being under the covering of spiritual authority shields believers from certain forms of spiritual warfare. A believer cannot be healthy without spiritual covering. Staying and growing in the church brings health, safety, and security in the spirit (Psalm 91:4–5). The church also protects believers from strange doctrines and strange teachings. It is trained to identify things that can sway the saints away from the faith.

3. Spiritual covering/clothing (Colossians 3:12): The words that come to us are clothings in the spirit that build natures in us. Just like Joseph’s coat of many colours, church teachings help clothe us with the manifold wisdom of God for all areas of our lives. The gospel of Christ is holistic; it addresses issues pertaining to our soul’s salvation (eternal life) as well as matters concerning our physical life, such as healing from sicknesses, natural prosperity, protection from evil, and divine authority.

Spiritual clothing is an anointing. When you remain faithful in a local assembly, the anointing of that assembly flows to you. Just as oil flows from Aaron's beard down to the skirts of his garments, so the anointing of the set man in a local assembly should flow to the saints in that assembly (Psalm 133:2-3). Every assembly carries a unique grace and calling, and believers must discern and align with those graces, as it is part of their inheritance. Beyond anointing, when you stay long and align in a local assembly, you will also discover your ministry and flourish in it. The fivefold ministry is meant to equip the saints and build them up for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12).

4. Responsibility: The church is a place of responsibility. As a member of an assembly, you must be responsible. The church pours into you and labours over you; therefore, you should also consider what you can contribute to the assembly. You should not be a believer who attends church and enjoys all the church has to offer but adds nothing in return. Just as maturity in a biological family comes with new obligations, spiritual growth demands that you also carry responsibility. You must cultivate a culture of responsibility as a member of a local assembly. Such responsibility includes bearing the financial burden of the assembly, as you would in your biological family. Every saint must enquire how they can be of service in a local assembly. It is an evidence of spiritual growth and maturity.

5. Accountability: As a member of a local assembly, you must be accountable to the church just as you are to your biological family. You should not simply appear and disappear at will without informing the leaders and the brethren. No one leaves a home without informing the members of the household and expects to return without some questions or concern.

The accountability we show in our natural families should also be extended to the church, because the church is a family. It is wrong to disappear from church without informing your leaders.

The church should also cultivate a culture of reaching out and checking up on members when they notice they are absent from meetings. Older members in the assembly should look out for new members and follow up with them until they are established. Younger believers should submit to older believers for direction, while older believers should also take responsibility for guiding the younger ones. Leadership at all levels must be responsible. The strength of a local assembly is its unity, and one way to maintain unity is by being accountable to one another. Believers should watch out for those who are divisive in nature and admonish them. If they do not repent, the scripture encourages rejecting such persons.

WEEKLY PROGRAMMES

Sunday Worship Service:

The Morning Dew	- 8:00am
Feast of Glory Service	- 10:00am

Word & Prayer

Tuesday	- 5:00pm
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The School of Christ

Thursday	- 5:30pm
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2026



Plan your Leave

23rd-29th,
November 2026

Mark your Calendars

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Junction, Ibadan