

EVANGELICAL CHURCH MAHWALALA

BIBLE STUDY

DISCIPLESHIP



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FOR THE PROCLAMATION, CONFIRMATION AND DEFENCE OF THE GOSPEL

98 Yifune iNkosi

- 1. Yifune iNkosi ekusithekeni,
Uhlolwe nguJesu, usemthandazweni.
Ulalele kahle 'kunyenyeza kwakhe,
Ezintweni zonke buz' intando yakhe.*
- 2. Ubamb' isikhathi, ngoba siyadlula,
Uhlale noJesu la kunokuthula,
Ubike kuyena konke ukuswela,
Nangomcebo wakhe uyakwenezela.*
- 3. Libala noJesu; ngoba nxa umbuka,
Yonk' im'hambo yakho iyakuguquka,
Ukuba ilunge, ifane neyakhe,
Nabantu babone uhambis' okwakhe.*
- 4. Hamba-ke noJesu, yen' uyakuhola
Nalokhokuhola ungabokusola.
Umlandel' eduze ezinyathelweni,
Umdumise njalo nasenhluphekweni.*
- 5. Ube-nokuthula ngasempefum'lweni,
Yonk' imicabango efik' enhliz'weni;
Ibuswe nguMoya okaNkulunkulu,
Uzolungiselwa inkonzo phezulu.*

1. INTRODUCTION

- It is important for a Christian to grow from being a convert to being a disciple.
- The purpose of this lesson is to discuss Discipleship.
- We want to talk about the transformation of a Christian from being a convert to being a disciple.
- A verse that helps us understand the importance of this transformation is,

***Romans 8:29-30** For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

- In His foreknowledge, God predestined man to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ through a process of calling, justification and glorification.
- **It is important to know that you did not choose to be here, and you did not choose God's plan for your life.**

***Jeremiah 1:4-5** Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying [calling], 5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you [foreknowledge], and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations [predestined].”*

- Did Jeremiah have a say in what he was predestined to become?

***1 John 2:1** My little children [convert], I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous [justified].*

- In Heaven's justice system, we are justified through Jesus Christ, our advocate.

***1 John 3:2-3** Beloved, we are God's children [convert] now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him [glorified], because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself [disciple] as he is pure.*

- In order to be glorified, the convert must grow into a disciple that purifies himself through the blood of Jesus Christ daily.
- We all have a divine purpose.
- You need to grow from being a convert to being a disciple.
- The church has a huge role to play in the transformation process called discipleship.

1.1. Definitions

It is important that we define some critical words in the topic.

1.1.1. Convert

- A convert is a person who is new to Christianity.
- A person who has recently received Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.
- A person who has chosen to follow Jesus Christ.

Mark 2:14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him.

- A person who is at the foundation stage of Christianity.
- They heard that Jesus Christ saves, and have decided to ‘try’ Christianity.

1.1.2. Disciple

- A disciple is a person who has been taught about the Kingdom of God, Christianity, how it works and as is doing the Great Commission.
- In the context of our Evangelical Church denomination, **the disciple proclaims, confirms and defends the Gospel.**
- This may be achieved through discipleship.

2. DISCIPLESHIP

- Discipleship is a complexly simple concept that describes a process of spiritual transformation into the likeness of Jesus Christ.
- The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 offers some insights into what discipleship is.
- However, before analysing Matthew 28:18-20, there are two important passages that give a background to the discipleship mandate in the Bible.

2.1. The Discipleship Mandate

2.1.1. Genesis 1:28

Genesis 1:28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the

sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

- This is the first commandment given to Adam, and Eve.
 - ‘Be fruitful’ means produce offspring;
 - ‘and multiply’ means produce many offspring;
 - ‘and fill the earth’ means let your offspring occupy the whole earth;
 - ‘and subdue it’ means bring the earth under your control;
 - ‘have dominion’ means to prevail over all the creation.
- It is worth noting that Genesis 1:28a suggests that this process starts with a person, made in the image of God producing an offspring, meaning that the person replicates themselves.
- So, from the beginning, God’s purpose has always been to fill the earth with people in His Likeness.
- However, after the fall (Genesis 3), the world became full of sinful people (Genesis 6), and God destroyed all evil on earth through the flood (Genesis 7-8); and then there was another command that was given to Abram.

2.1.2. Genesis 12:1-3

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

- In Genesis 12:1-3, Abram is commanded to “get out” of his country, leave his family and go to a new place, and God promised him the blessing of an offspring, a land, and personal blessing.
- God promises to supply the provisions to enable the fruitfulness and multiplication.
- Abram was going to be the source of God’s blessing to the nations.
- As a result, “The book of the genealogy” of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1), demonstrates that the work of Jesus Christ is a continuation of the mission God gave to Abraham, clearly linking the purpose of Jesus Christ to the promises made to Abram in Genesis 12:1-3.
- This is evident in the Great Commission, Matthew 28:19-20.

2.1.3. Matthew 28:19-20

Matthew 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- It is important to note that Jesus Christ was speaking to His disciples in this text.
- They had already been called to follow Jesus, they listened to His teachings, saw and experienced His work, first hand, were sent to do the same and succeeded (Lk 10:1-23), saw his death and resurrection, and (many) were now clear that Jesus in the Christ, the Son of God.
- By following Jesus Christ, the disciples had already been transformed from converts into being disciples of Christ.
- They were being commanded to go into the world and make disciples.
- They were commanded to replicate themselves.
- The baptizing and teaching are activities that make disciples.

2.2. Discipleship is Powered by the Holy Spirit

- It is the Holy Spirit that provides the power for discipleship

John 16:13-14 When the Spirit of truth comes he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

- That is why the Pentecost inaugurated the Church, as we know it today.

Acts 2:2-4,11 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance... 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”

- They were evangelising to the people of different nations (Matt 28:19) that were present in Jerusalem at that time.
- They were using the spiritual gift of tongues for that specific purpose.
- The Holy Spirit baptises us into the Body of Christ when we are saved.
- The Holy Spirit gives us Spiritual gifts which are meant to edify the church.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.

- Each member discipled another in the process of spiritual regeneration.
- The divine mandate for man is to replicate the image of God amongst all mankind.

2.3. Why Is Discipleship Important?

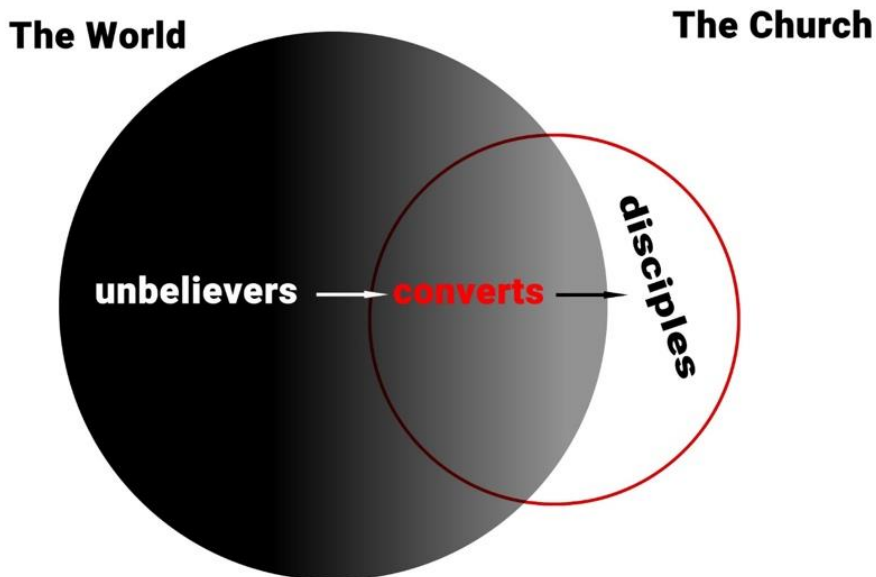
- People's names need to be written in the book of life.

Luke 10:19-20 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. 20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

- Christ assures that because they did the Great Commission, the disciples' names are written in the Book of life.
- Disciples are not perfect; hence they purify themselves daily.

1 John 3:3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

- When you stumble and fall, dust yourself off, repent, and continue pursuing God's purpose.
- There is a church with a beautiful slogan, **“Empty hell, fill up heaven”**



2.4. How Are We Doing Discipleship?

- How many have we led to Christ?
- How many have we baptized?
- How effective are our Sermons, Bible Study and Lessons?
- Are we helping Christians see God and His purpose for us?
- Are we helping converts grow to become disciples?

2.5. Discipleship Is Bearing Fruit

- The bible is full of imagery about fruit.
- In the Old Testament,
 - the very first command to man, “be fruitful and multiply...” (**Genesis 1:28**);
 - But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them (**Exodus 1:7**);
 - And the Lord made his people very fruitful and made them stronger than their foes (**Psalms 105:24**);
 - Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply (**Jeremiah 23:3**);
 - And I will multiply on you man and beast, and they shall multiply and be fruitful. And I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times, and will do more good to you than ever before. Then you will know that I am the Lord (**Ezekiel 36:11**).
- In the New Testament,
 - Bear fruit in keeping with repentance (**Matthew 3:8**);
 - for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush (**Luke 6:44**);
 - Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit (**John 12:24**).
- Notice how all these references to fruitfulness are linked to Genesis 1:28.
- In the **Old Testament**, the emphasis seems to be on multiplication (increase).
- In the **New Testament**, the emphasis is more on the benefit of the fruit
- Perhaps because Jesus Christ had been revealed and demonstrated what being fruitful and multiplying looks like.
- This is clearly articulated in **Galatians 5:22-23**

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

2.6. The Principle of the Fruit

- Notice that the Bible refers to Spiritual **fruit (singular)** -not fruits-
- A fruit is a reproductive body that contains a seed = contains life.
- The fruit has a season when it is meant to produce a seed that will grow to produce another version of itself.
- When explaining the Parable of the Sower, Jesus Christ said,

***Luke 8:11** Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.*

- In our Christian context, **we have the seed, the Word of God,** which we are supposed to plant in others so that they to do the same.
- It is fruit bearing disciples that will lead to Church growth.
- Discipleship equips Christians to be fruitful and multiply.

2.7.1 AM = The True Vine

- You cannot be a disciple outside of Jesus Christ.



- One of the most important requirements for people to grow from convert to disciple is to remain in Christ.

John 15:1-8 *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes that it may bear more fruit. 3 Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*

- Every Christian is expected to abide in Christ and bear fruit.
- God is actively doing His vine dressing.
- The Holy Spirit provides the conditions suitable for great production.
- You cannot be in Christ and not bear fruit.
- An older vine produces better quality fruit.
- You Will Be Pruned
- God has a specific fruit that He wants from the vine
- Be A Branch In Christ
- The Season Is Your Life, Make your life count.
- Each branch of the vine can only bear fruit once in a season
- If he or she does not, they will be cast into the eternal fire.

3. WHY MANY STRUGGLE TO BECOME DISCIPLES?

Many Christians struggle to become disciples because discipleship requires humility, sacrifice, time, accountability, and courage—all of which go against natural human tendencies and cultural pressures.

3.1. They Misunderstand Discipleship

- Many think simply attending and partaking in church activities is enough.
- They do not realise that discipleship requires surrender, obedience, and transformation.

Mark 1:16-20 Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

3.2. Pride and Self-Reliance

- They are influenced by the cultural expectations.
- They are raised to be independent, strong, and self-sufficient.
- This clashes with the requirement of humility and total dependence on God.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

3.3. Fear of Change or Sacrifice

- Many cannot let go of the comforts of the former life, habits, friendships, or lifestyles.
- Some men fear losing control, respect, or even material comfort.
- Many are not ready to pay the price.

Luke 14:27 Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

Matthew 19:21 Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." 22 When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

3.4. Distractions and Busyness

- Work, money, entertainment, and family pressures often take priority.
- The world encourages success, wealth, and pleasure; more than faithfulness and service.
- Many struggle to make time for prayer, Scripture, and serving.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you.

3.5. Lack of Discipleship Models

- Many look up to those they perceive to be better or doing what they would like to do.
- Many times, churches focus more on activities rather than mentoring and walking together in Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1 Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

*3. Libala noJesu; ngoba nxa umbuka,
Yonk' im'hambo yakho iyakuguquka,
Ukuba ilunge, ifane neyakhe,
Nabantu babone uhambis' okwakhe.*

3.6. Spiritual Warfare

- Satan is busy working to distract, discourage, and deceive Christians.

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

- People are often tempted with lust, greed, power, and pride.
- If the believer is not accountable to any leader in the church, they easily drift.

3.7. Cultural Pressure

- Modern culture often labels faith as weak or irrelevant.
- Some Christians hesitate to be bold disciples because of fear of ridicule or rejection.
- False doctrines also play a part.

Matewu 5:17 “Ningacabangi kutsi ngitele kutewucitsa umtsetfo netimfundziso tebaphrofethi. Angiketeli kutewucitsa, kodvwa ngitele kutewugcwalisa.

Romans 12:1-2 I appeal to you therefore, brothers by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

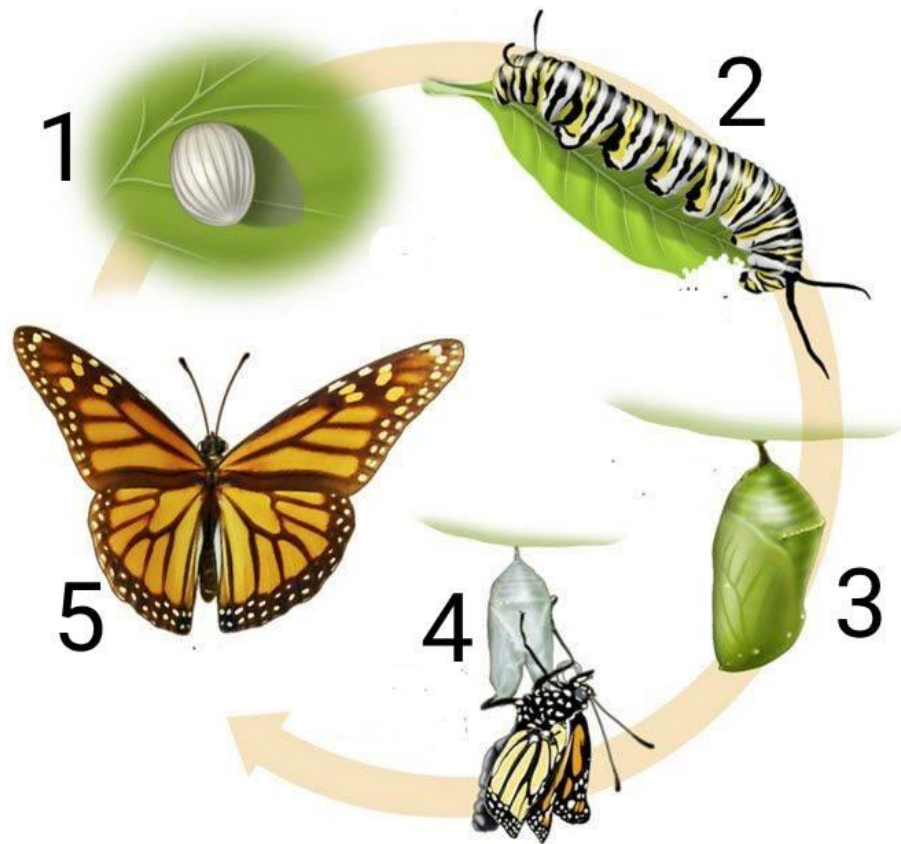
- Christians need to overcome these psychological barriers.

4. DISCIPLESHIP EXPRESSED IN NATURE

- God's Work can be observed in nature (General Revelation) and also through the Word (Special Revelation)

4.1. The Butterfly (General Revelation)

- The butterfly lifecycle demonstrates how the transformation from convert to disciple can transform a person's life.



- **STAGE 1 – CONVERSION:** the believer accepts Christ as Lord and Saviour, having received the Word of God.

Acts 2:37-28 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers what shall we do?” 38 And Peter said to them “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- **STAGE 2 – GROWING IN THE LORD:** the believer has accepted Christ but is still learning the new life. He still has old habits.

1 Timothy 3:6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.

- But the Holy Spirit is work in him.

John 16:8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

- **STAGE 3 – DIES TO SELF:** the realise that in order to truly become a disciple, the believer needs to die to self and forget about the barriers to discipleship. Keen to fellowship with others.

Philippians 1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

- **STAGE 4 – EQUIP YOURSELF FOR DISCIPLESHIP:** the believer takes seriously the call to disciple and equips themselves for ministry. They look for opportunities to serve.

2 Timothy 4:1-2 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

- **STAGE 5 – DISCIPLE:** looking for and seizing opportunities to minister.

Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

4.2. Why The Butterfly Image?

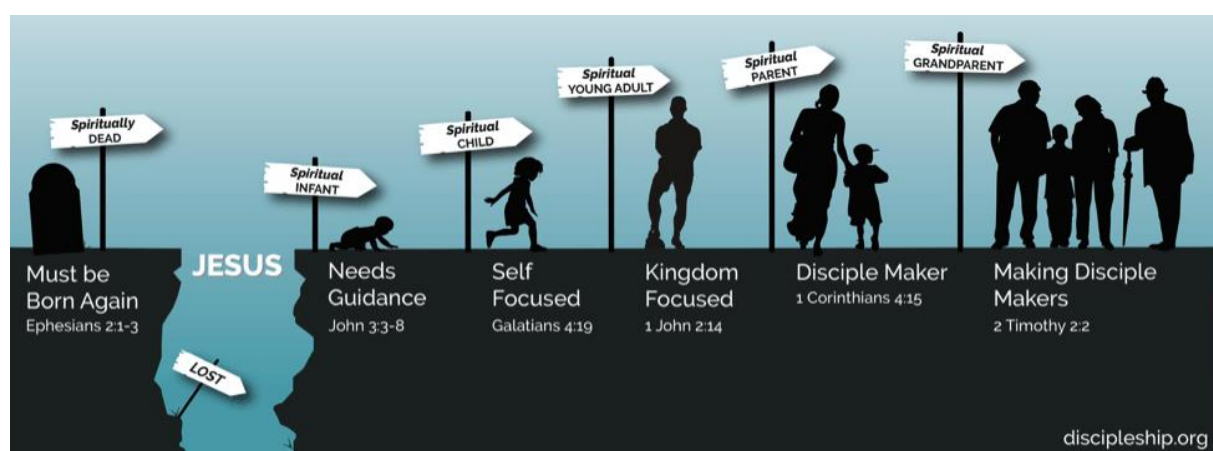
- It is seen by people in the different stages of its regeneration.
- Butterflies are important as pollinators, which help plants reproduce.
- They are also crucial environmental indicators, with their population health reflecting the overall health of an ecosystem and warnings of environmental issues.
- Similarly, Christians are the custodian of the Word of God (seed)
- The Word of God is the seed the regenerates a convert into a disciple.

4.3. The Word Of God (Special Revelation)

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

- Helped by the Holy Spirit, the church provides the opportunities for converts to hear, read, and understand the Word of God, and apply it to their life.

5. THE DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS



- The butterfly lifecycle may be translated to a discipleship process as follows:

STATE	REQUIRED ACTION	VERSE
Spiritually Dead (Lost)	Must be born Again	Ephesians 2:1-3
Spiritual Infant (Convert)	Needs Guidance	John 3:3-8
Spiritual Child	Self-Focused	Galatians 4:19
Spiritual Young Adult	Kingdom Focused	1 John 2:14
Spiritual Parent	Disciple Maker	1 Corinthians 4:15
Spiritual Grandparent	Making Disciple Makers	2 Timothy 2:2

- How practical is this discipleship process?
- This is what we are meant to be doing through fellowships.

5.1. The Roles in Discipleship

- It is important that we understand our role in this.
- The spiritual regeneration is the work of God.

***1 Corinthians 3:5-9** What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed as the Lord assigned to each. 6 I planted Apollos watered but God gave the growth. 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 8 He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field God's building.*

- Ours is to plant the seed, the Word of God
- We need to leave the rest to God.

***Mark 4:26-29** And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. 27 He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. 28 The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."*

- Just do your best.
- Commit to discipleship

***Colossians 3:23-24** Whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.*

6. IN CLOSING

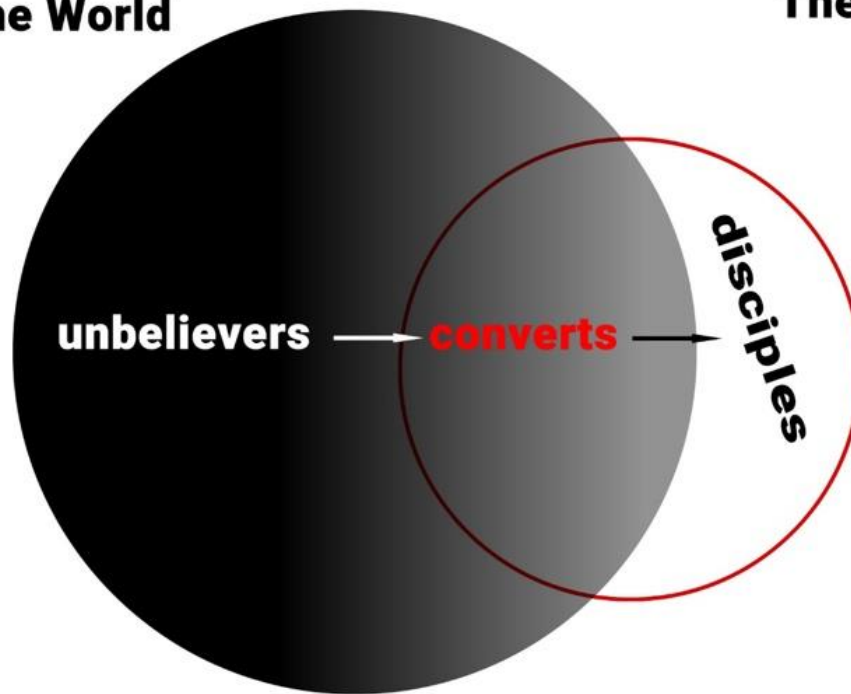
- It is important for a Christian to grow from being a convert to being a disciple.

***Romans 8:29-30** For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

- Every member in the church ought to be transformed from being a convert to disciple.

The World

The Church



- We are called to partake in this by becoming disciples.
- This is the Discipleship Mandate [Genesis 1:28; Genesis 12:1-3; and Matthew 28:19-20]
- A disciple is a person who has been taught about the Kingdom of God, Christianity, how it works and as is doing the Great Commission.
- We need Christians that will proclaim, confirm and defend the Gospel.
- The Triune God does the transformation
- Our work is to bring the Word of God closer to the People
- The divine purpose of a Christian is to be a disciple
- This way they can fulfil the biblical mandate of growth given to mankind;
- Then we will see the expected transformation in the family, community, workplace and the world at large.
- This may be achieved through discipleship.
- Discipleship Is Bearing Fruit and Multiplying
- Men often struggle to become disciples

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