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Title

A Comparison of 18th Century Discipleship Approache of John Wesley to the 21st Century
Discipleship Approach of Greg Ogden

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Dedication

To the affectionate memory of my late mother Elizabeth Esi Arthur, who introduced me to John Wesley at an early stage of my life.

To my dear wife Beatrice Konadu Sefaa, whose support, patience and sacrifice spurred me on to this achievement.

To my Brother Richard Dwomoh for your kindness and sacrifices that have helped me study in Norway.

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I am highly indebted to the Almighty God for the grace he granted me to complete this work. I am indebted to those who have instilled into me a deep attachment to John Wesley and to the tradition he established.

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Abstract

Jesus commanded the Church in Matthew 28 to go and make disciples of all nations. However, Jesus disciplined 12 of his followers and they became transformed and empowered, such that through them, Christianity spread in the world. I believe many churches seek to obey Jesus' command above by engaging in many different discipleship approaches. John Wesley therefore, tried to obey this command by undertaking a discipleship approach that resulted into the spread of scriptural holiness in the 18th century Britain and beyond. Thus, the creation of Methodist churches in almost every part of the world today. In view of the above, the United Methodist Church states "the mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."¹ However, one wonders how discipleship is done today. In light of this, this thesis seeks to compare the 18th century discipleship approach of John Wesley to the 21st century discipleship approach of Greg Ogden. The study is a qualitative research, which deals with literature studies. Hermeneutic theory of interpretations was employed to understand and interpret the historical discipleship of Wesley and the contemporary discipleship approach of Ogden. The study was guided by the following sub-questions what is John Wesley's theology of discipleship? What is Greg Ogden's theology of discipleship? What is John Wesley's discipleship approach? What is Greg Ogden's discipleship approach? The study, therefore, established that John Wesley used 3-level small groups of society meeting, band meeting and class meeting as his main discipleship approach. And Ogden created a practical guide, book called *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* as his main discipleship approach. However, the study further established that though both Wesley and Ogden used small groups as their main discipleship approaches, Wesley's approach offers a greater opportunity for the transformation and empowerment of the disciple into becoming a change maker.

¹Available at UMC's webpage: <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/section-1-the-churches>

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Chapter One

Introduction

This introduction chapter will deal with the background of the thesis topic. It will also present the thesis question, objectives of the thesis, research methods and materials to be used for the thesis as well as the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Background to the Thesis Topic

This thesis seeks to compare the 18th century discipleship approach of John Wesley to the contemporary discipleship approach of Greg Ogden. The research will also provide glimpse of the theology of Wesley and Ogden. This research seeks to undertake the above enterprise because of my personal and academic motivations, among many other interests. Personally, I am of the view that discipleship is the means by which God transforms and empowers his people for them to become agents of change and transformation in the world. And academically, I am stimulated and challenged by the discipleship approach of John Wesley in the 18th century by which God used as agent of change and transformation. The assertion above draws it evidence from the result of the discipleship approach of John Wesley, as he sought to spread scriptural holiness in Britain, and the results was the spread of Methodism across the nation and beyond the borders of Britain. I observed that Wesley tried to take a cue from Jesus' approach of discipleship, as we read from the Gospels, and the approach of the first disciples.

The Gospels record that Jesus chose 12 men from different background of life and made them his disciples.² According to Ogden, these men were ordinary and common people, who were full of weaknesses and flawed through and through.³ However, when these insignificant, flawed men became Jesus' disciples, they became transformed, and became agents of transformation for the entire world.

From John Wesley's life and history in the 18th century England, I believe he personally desired and pursued a life transforming encounter with Jesus. Additionally, I believe Wesley was partly not satisfied with the type of Christianity that was being practiced in his days. Probably because he felt it lacks power, holiness and the transformation that made Jesus' original disciples change makers, and agents of transformation. So, Wesley sought to

² Matthew 10:1-4 and Luke 6:12-16

³ Ogden. 2003. *Transforming Discipleship: Making disciples a few at a time*. p65

transform the church (the Church of England). My observation from Wesley's history lead me to believe that as he pursued and dedicated his life to become a disciple of Jesus, his life was transformed, empowered and made into an agent of Change and transformation. The result is the establishment of Methodist Churches in all over the world.

As a child, growing up in a home of Methodist parentage, the Bible and books on John Wesley's life became the stories I often heard and read. Especially from my mother, who was fond of John Wesley. I became deeply challenged and influenced by the life of Jesus, and his followers in the Gospels, and that of John Wesley.

As a Christian, I realized I was missing the sort of transformation Jesus' disciple and John Wesley had. And as a Methodist pastor's son, growing up in the church and living as a Christian, I agree with Ogden and many other Christians that the 21st century Christian church lacks the power and the transformation that ought to make the church and Christians agents of change and transformation in the world. However, it is observed in the Bible that when one becomes a Christian, the person becomes a new creation, who lives a transformed and an empowered life.⁴ But what is the concept of the 21st century Christian life?

In my opinion, to be a Christian today is to recognize ones need for a saviour, and to be able to recite and affirm some creeds or doctrinal statement and that will be it. Dietrich Bonhoeffer noted two generations ago that Christians are practicing a form of Christianity without a cross.⁵ And today's Christians, according to Ogden, practice a sort of Christianity without following Jesus. And unfortunately, according to Ogden, Christian leaders, pastors and teachers have made the church to believe that it is alright to be a Christian without following Jesus. All because we teach, preach and practice what Bonhoeffer calls 'cheap grace' - "the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession."⁶ Cheap grace, According to Ogden, is "grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."⁷ Ogden further points out that the result of this has produced Christians who are not so different from non-Christians in terms of moral values and life style choices.⁸

⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Romans 12:2; Colossians 1:10

⁵ Bonhoeffer. *The Cost of Discipleship*.pp44-45

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ogden. *Discipleship Essentials: A guide to building your life in Christ*. 2007: 7-8

⁸ Ibid. 2007.

Another effect of this situation, I believe, is the lack of commitment, zeal and enthusiasm in our churches, leading to loss of members in our congregations, especially in Europe. This therefore depicts the sad nature of the contemporary church's weakness in adhering to the charge of Jesus to make disciples of all nations.

Fortunately, Jesus and his disciples, as we read from the New Testament, have demonstrated to us that discipleship is the master key that transforms and empowers people to live, work and follow Christ.⁹ And as Methodists, history tells us that Wesley's approach of discipleship was the means by which God transformed and empowered the people called Methodist to live and work with and for Jesus.¹⁰

Today, as a Methodist, the question I ask with respect to discipleship is how did John Wesley do discipleship in the 18th Century? And how is discipleship done in the 21st century? To be able to answer the questions above, this thesis will compare the discipleship approaches of John Wesley and Greg Ogden. I have personally interacted with Ogden's discipleship materials and I believe he is one of the leading disciple makers today. He is a disciple maker, pastor, teacher and writer. According to him and the tributes in his books, his life and work is known to have influenced so many people in the world.¹¹

I believe this thesis question is very relevant to Methodists today as the mission statement for the United Methodist Church, for instance, states that "Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world"¹²

Why the study does compare Wesley to Greg Ogden, a Presbyterian? I made efforts to compare Wesley to a modern day Methodist disciple-based minister and writer but I realized that a few Methodist scholars have written on the subject. David Lowe Waston, Steven W. Manskar, and Kevin M. Watson among others as Methodist elders and Scholars have done some writings on discipleship. However, they have not got enough materials for the interest of this research. Kevin M. Watson, for instance, has done great work in his two books *The Class Meeting*, and *A Blueprint for Discipleship*. However, his work is limited to the class meetings and the general rules of Wesley as a means of making disciples of Jesus. But Wesley's

⁹ The gospels records show that the disciples of Jesus became ardent followers of Jesus even after his death and that resulted in the spread of Christianity

¹⁰ Watson, Kevin, M. (2014) *The Class Meeting: Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience*. Seedbed Publishing. U.S.A. Loc.351

¹¹ Praise for transforming Discipleship. Loc. 3209 and Discipleship Essentials at <http://www.discipleshipessentials.org/testimonies>;

¹² Available at UMC's webpage: <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/section-1-the-churches>

approach of discipleship is known to have three concentrations for making disciples of Jesus, and these three concentrations are the subject of this thesis.

On the other hand, my interactions with Ogden's discipleship materials have led me to select him as a suitable candidate for this research because he has spent his adult life as a pastor and scholar on the subject, and has produced enough materials for the interest of this research. In addition, Ogden claims that his materials have wider coverage in the world, as it has been translated into several different languages.

1.2 Thesis Question

The theme of this thesis is discipleship in a comparative perspective and seeks to compare John Wesley's discipleship approach to modern day discipleship approach of Greg Ogden. Wesley had a 3-level discipleship approach-society meeting, class meeting and band meeting. For Wesley, belonging to these small group meetings will be a means by which *repentance, growth in faith in Christ and holiness* are inculcated into people, so that they may live a life of transformation and empowerment as Christians. In view of this, Wesley observed that these three elements above form the main doctrines of the Methodist Church. He therefore states that "Our main doctrines, which include all the rest, are three, that of repentance, of faith, and of holiness..."¹³ On the basis of this, I can therefore say that these three main doctrines of the Methodist Church became key targets of Wesley's three level discipleship meetings.

Ogden, on the other hand is passionate about discipleship in small group as a platform by which the Holy Spirit brings transformation into the life of the Christian to become Christlike. Ogden, therefore, believes that small group discipleship brings about transformation as it provides empowerment to the members to reproduce, create intimate relationships for change, foster accountability for loving one another, provides opportunity for embracing a broad picture of the Christian life, and practicing spiritual disciplines that lead to intimacy with Christ and to serve others.¹⁴

In view of the above, this research seeks to answer the question compare the discipleship approach of John Wesley to the discipleship approach of Greg Ogden. To be able to achieve the goal above, this thesis will deal with the following sub-questions and topics What is John Wesley's theology of discipleship? What is Greg Ogden's theology of discipleship? What is John Wesley's discipleship approach? What is Greg Ogden's discipleship approach?

¹³ John Wesley, "The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained," in *Works*, 9:227

¹⁴ Gregg Ogden, 2003. *Transforming Discipleship*, pp.14-15, Kindle Version.

1.3 Objectives of the Research

The main goal of this research is to uncover John Wesley's discipleship approach of the 18th century Britain and compare it to today's discipleship approach. John Wesley's 3-level discipleship approach worked effectively in his era. And this approach I believe helped establish the Methodist Movement into a world-wide church. For the past three decades, many small group meetings have been established and used by many churches in the world but the church, according to Ogden, has largely failed to make Christians to be followers of Jesus.¹⁵ I have noted that Ogden has been at the forefront of discipleship over 20 years now and his small group approaches have seen some gains in our context. However, I think today's church still has potential of making transformed and empowered disciples of Jesus, so that we may witness the infectious efficacy of discipleship in our societies and world at large. Similar to what Britain witnessed in the 18th century, through John Wesley. It must be noted however that though the research has Methodist congregations in mind as the primary target, this work however will be conducted in a way that will make Christians in general targets.

This work may also become a starting point for further research into how John Wesley's model of discipleship influenced the growth of the Methodist Movement into a world-wide phenomenon.

1.4 Research Methods

This research will be a qualitative type where literature studies will take a centre stage. Qualitative in this research deals with research strategy by which words form the main elements for the collection and analysis of data.¹⁶ General research question such as what is John Wesley's approach of discipleship and what is Greg Ogden's discipleship approach will be the drive that guides the selection of the relevant material for this research. The research will therefore investigate and compare the works or writings of Wesley and Ogden with regards to their respective discipleship approaches. The research seeks to investigate by presenting the history of how John Wesley did discipleship in the 18th century and compares it with how discipleship is done today by considering Greg Ogden's discipleship approach.

To be able to present the history of both disciple makers above, hermeneutic type of interpretation will be employed to glean the best possible understanding of the history of the two approaches. Hermeneutics as used in this study can be said to be a theory of interpretation

¹⁵Ogden. *Discipleship Essentials: A guide to building your life in Christ*. 2007: 7-8

¹⁶ Bryman, Alan, (2012), *Social Research Methods*. 4th edition. Oxford University Press. P36-37

that refers to the interpretation of written text¹⁷. Since the historical presentation of Wesley and Ogden's discipleship approaches in this research represent interpretations in itself, the use of the hermeneutical approach enables me to identify my own 'provisional knowledge',¹⁸ as a motivation that drives my choice of Wesley and Ogden's texts as points of interest for interpretation. In this way, I will be able to identify my own prejudice in order to assume some form of detachment from it to allow the 'internal autonomy'¹⁹ of the text to be respected and appreciated.

Moreover, my interactions with the texts represents a dialogue with the text and as such, the voice of the text is therefore to be allowed to speak and heard, so that this study will not compel my preunderstanding to represent the voice of the text. Hermeneutics in addition will aid me to understand how Wesley did discipleship in the 18th century by understanding the social and 'traditional'²⁰ situations of Wesley's era.

From the above, I can say that this study as a qualitative research deals with understanding historical discipleship approach and that of a contemporary method, and will therefore, emphasise the ability to enter into the contexts of both Wesley and Ogden to understand them on their own terms in order to be able to interpret them. And in view of this, this research will make use of detailed description of events in the life of Wesley and Ogden to be able to understand the social context of why both Wesley and Ogden did discipleship in a particular fashion. This enables the me to ask vital and relevant questions about the selected texts so that the objectives of the study will be realized.

1.5 Research Materials

Whenever possible, the main material source for this study with respect to Wesley will be a historical account of Wesley's writings, letters and journals or diary entries, as collected and gathered by Methodist scholars. Special attention will be given to these documents as found in *The Works of John Wesley*, as credible sources of Wesley's writings. Other relevant sources such as Kenneth J. Collins' *John Wesley: A Theological Journey* and Richard Heitzenrater's *Wesley and the People called Methodist* will be an integral part of this research. Again, the works of Methodist scholars and historians shall be considered in order to undertake a research that embraces all the relevant available resources whenever possible. Greg Ogden's

¹⁷ Pokorny, Petr, (2011), *Hermeneutics as a Theory of Understanding*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K. p.3

¹⁸ Ibid. 89 Provisional Knowledge refers to our preunderstanding.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Pokorny. 2011. pp94-98

two books *Discipleship Essentials* and *Transforming Discipleship* will also be used as key material source for this research. In addition, other relevant materials from Ogden will also be considered.

1.6 The Structure of the Thesis

The first chapter of this thesis will deal with the introduction where items such as the thesis question, objectives of the thesis, research methods and materials to be used for the thesis as well as the structure of the thesis will be presented. The second chapter will deal with a brief but relevant presentation of biography and context of both John Wesley and Greg Ogden. The third chapter will briefly present theology of discipleship, where Wesley and Ogden's theology of discipleship will be highlighted. The fourth chapter present the discipleship approaches of both Wesley and Ogden. Under this chapter, the thesis will deal with the following sub-questions What is John Wesley's approach of discipleship? What is Greg Ogden's approach of discipleship? Even though the entire research in itself is a comparison, chapter five will be the discussion part where Wesley and Ogden's discipleship approaches will be addressed. Finally, chapter six will give concluding remarks of the thesis.

Chapter Two

Biography and Context

This chapter will deal with John Wesley's Biography. It will also present Wesley's context. The chapter, in addition, will deal with Greg Ogden's biography, and his context. However, this brief background about Wesley and Ogden will present what is most relevant to the interest of this research.

2.1 John Wesley

John Wesley was born in 17th June 1703 at Epworth in Lincolnshire. He is the fifth among 19 siblings. His father, Samuel Wesley, was a priest in the Church of England, and served as the rector of Epworth. Susana Wesley, the mother of John provided the children with basic education as they were home schooled. Both Samuel and Susana had puritan background which became part of the heritage of Wesley.²¹

I believe John was first influenced by his family. To this assertion, Richard P. Heitzenrater noted that while Susana inculcated her theological understanding and reflections to John and his siblings through her home schooling system, the children's religious and intellectual interests may have been aroused by Samuel's Sunday sermons and personal library.²² This influence became vivid as John later fell on some of his father's organizational skills²³ to form and manage small group meetings in the Methodist revival.

At 10 years old, in 1714, John was sent to Charterhouse school in London for his formal schooling. John after spending 6 years in Charterhouse, matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford. It was at Oxford that John's interest in faith and spirituality surfaced.²⁴

In 1725, John read Bishop Taylor's book *Rules and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying*. Wesley was greatly influenced by this book, especially, the part that deals with "purity of intention" that he resolved to dedicate his whole life, thought and actions to God.²⁵ John's quest for spirituality drove him to read Thomas a Kempis's *Christian Pattern*, and then concluded that giving his whole heart to God is the only way for one to gain in God. He later read William Law's *Treatise of Christian Perfection (1726)* and *The Serious Call to a Devout*

²¹Heitzenrater 1995, 17-27

²² Heitzenrater 1995: 26-30

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid. 29-31

²⁵ Outler 1964:7

and Holy Life (1728) which lead him to a greater conviction that he needs to live completely as a Christian but not half Christian. He then determined to live through the grace of God in order to be entirely devoted to God, and to give God all his soul, body and substance.²⁶

Wesley decided to continue at Oxford, after obtaining his bachelor's degree as a tutor, which will set him on a path for ordination. With the notion of ordination fresh on John's mind, he decided in 1725 to implement his new-found principles of Christian living. In view of the above, John began to keep a diary to enable him to track his progress in holy living. On the 19th September of the same year, Wesley was ordained as a deacon by Bishop Potter of Oxford.²⁷

Then in 1726, he was elected fellow of Lincoln College in Oxford. After receiving his MA in 14th February 1727, John became his father's assistant at Epworth and Wroot. And a year later, John travelled back to Oxford to be ordained as a presbyter.²⁸

Charles Wesley studying at Christ Church at that time had a need of a mentor who will help him live as a Christian by knowing what to read, how to keep a spiritual diary and many other useful ways of life as a Christian. Charles therefore, sent a letter to John to help him in this regard.

Moreover, in May 1729, John received a letter from Charles that he has convinced a colleague to study and attend church services with him. This development encouraged John that he paid Charles a visit at Oxford. John's presence encouraged Charles and his colleagues to meet occasionally for prayer, religious conversation, study, and for a regular attendance of the Sacrament, as well as indulged in many other relevant activities. After the summer break, Wesley was recalled back to Oxford to serve as a paid tutor. Wesley then helped the small group meeting of Charles and his colleagues to continue to meet, where they rotated among their rooms. As the meetings kept it momentum, the group added to their meetings visitation of inmate of prisons and teaching of orphans and providing help to the needy.²⁹ This then became the genesis of Oxford Methodism.

Gradually, a structure begun to form in the group as they also engaged in many charity works and undertook many visitations to prisons, in their pursuit for holy life. Their frequent attendance to religious meetings and methodical way of life earned them a nick name known

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid. 34-35

²⁸ Heitzenrater 1995: 36-37

²⁹ Ibid. 37-39

as the 'Holy Club', which later metamorphosed into the 'Methodist' by 1732. At this point, John's influence as the leader of the group became visible as he led the activities of the group. John's leadership gave the group a sense of direction and purpose as he leads the group in pursuit of salvation and a life of holiness.³⁰

The drive underlining John's passion for leading and organizing this group was to obtain a purity of heart and life that only comes from God, which will provide him the assurance of salvation. This quest led him now to look beyond his personal salvation to a greater concern for other's salvation as well. In view of this, John was always opened and willing to embrace people who are on a similar spiritual pilgrimage so that together they pursue this burning desire that has captured his heart, mind and life. The ability of John to embrace like-minded people in pursuit of assurance of salvation came handy, when members of the Oxford Wesley society left the group for many different reasons in 1732.

John came in contact with John Clayton whose union with Wesley opened up many different opportunities for Wesley. Clayton helped Wesley to set up many societies and also introduced him to SPCK (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge). Wesley became a member of this society and purchased their materials for distribution. I have also noted that Wesley's association to SPCK influenced his thought life, and also became a model, to some extent, for Wesley's small groups. Again, Wesley's membership to SPCK aroused and encouraged him to consider taking a missionary trip to Georgia.³¹

Wesley and the Oxford society's quest for true spirituality was modelled along the spirituality of the early Church and Arminian theology. Wesley and his society were also concerned about the purity of the heart that functions out practically in the society. In view of the above, Wesley and the society embarked on strict rules such as fasting, prayer, visitations to prison inmates, and charity works to the poor and the needy. Wesley's spirituality then emerges out as a life renewed in the image of God, where the change God brings about on the inner man reflects vividly on the way of life of the Christian. Thus, a Christian is a person that loves God and neighbour.³² This view of spirituality became the bedrock of Wesley's motivation for discipleship and all the small groups he set up with his friends, and eventually, the Methodist societies in Great Britain and the United State of America, in the 18th century.

³⁰ Ibid. 38-39

³¹ Ibid 1995: 44

³² Ibid. 1995: 46-47

As I have observed above, Wesley's association with SPCK, encouraged him to become a missionary in Georgia. And so, Wesley sent a letter to Reverend Burton on October 10, 1735 that his main motive for accepting to go to Georgia was because of "the hope of saving my own soul,"³³ said Wesley. In addition, Wesley maintained that in this same letter that he stands to gain a new degree of holiness in Georgia than in England. And so, he said to Reverend Burton

But you will perhaps ask, Can't you save your own soul in England as well as in Georgia? I answer, No, neither can I hope to attain the same degree of holiness here which I may there; neither, if I stay here knowing this, can I reasonably hope to attain any degree of holiness at all.³⁴

In view of the above, on October 14, 1735, Wesley departed for Georgia, together with his brother Charles. Wesley, as a pastor to the colonists at Savannah and Frederica, in Georgia established small groups for mutual accountability and care. To this, Wesley observed in his journal that "We began to execute at Frederica what we had before agreed to do at Savannah. Our design was, on Sunday in the afternoon and every evening after public service, to spend some time with the most serious of the communicants in singing, reading, and conversation."³⁵

According to Wesley, his missionary trip to Georgia lasted for "one year and nearly nine months"³⁶ when he left Georgia on 2nd December 1737 for England. Wesley returned to England not fully convinced of assurance of his salvation. He admitted that sin still ruled him because he was constantly relapsing into sin.

On 24th May 1738, at Aldersgate, John Wesley had an encounter with the Holy Spirit as he admitted that

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistles to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart

³³Baker Frank (1980) *The Works of John Wesley*. Vol.25, Letters 1. Clarendon Press Oxford. New York. pp439

³⁴ *Ibid.* 1980

³⁵ Ward and Heitzenrater (1988) *The Work of John Wesley*. Vol.18, Journal and Diaries. Abingdon Press. p160.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 1988. p195

strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he has taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.³⁷

I believe Wesley's expression above, talks about his regeneration and being born-again, where he was blessed with the power over sin. And this experience spurred him on for a life of transformation and empowerment, which resulted in the establishment of the Methodist movement and revival in England. Wesley organized the new convert into societies, class and bands in his bid to spread "Spiritual Christianity" in England. And from these came many Methodist societies in England and beyond.

John Wesley married in February 1751 to Mary Vazeille. However, Wesley's marriage did not work for him and his wife. I have observed that Wesley valued ministry more than his marriage and ended up giving more attention to ministry than his marriage.³⁸

Wesley continued passionately and diligently in ministry such that his toil and work in ministry began to take a toll on his life in 1790.³⁹ Even though, Wesley's health began to deteriorate, making him weak and dim in the eyes, he still continued to do ministry in 1791. In view of this, Wesley expressed in a letter to Thomas Greathead I am half blind and half lame, but by the help of God I creep on still.⁴⁰

John Wesley, the father of Methodism, breathed his last breath on 2nd March 1791 in the presence of some loved ones. Today, Methodism has spread to almost every part of the world.⁴¹

2.2 John Wesley's Context

The 18th century Britain was plagued by the effects of many revolutions and reformations of the century before. Religious and political conflicts became the order of the day to the extent that the Church of England became a breeding ground for many different reformations and power struggles between the Puritans, people loyal to the Roman Catholic Church, and the Arminians⁴². These political and religious upheavals resulted in destroying the Monarch system at that time and the Church. Therefore, in the absence of a monarch and an established

³⁷ Ibid. 1988. pp249-50

³⁸ Collins. 2003. pp. 166-169. Kindle Edition

³⁹ Telford, John (1931) *The Letters of John Wesley*. Vol. 8. The Epworth Press. P199

⁴⁰ Ibid. 1931. P257

⁴¹ Collins. 2003. p. 261

⁴² Heitzenrater 1995: 12-13

Church at that time, religious fanaticism took shape in a quest for religious freedom, according to Heitzenrater.⁴³ However, in the late 17th century, the unfortunate result of the religious fanaticism was that after the restoration of the monarchy and the reestablishment of the Church, the British people consciously associated any spiritual zeal with religious fanaticism.⁴⁴ And this general attitude of the British people generated into the breakdown of the moral and religious fibre of the nation. As the phenomenon above gain general acceptance, pockets of people reacted against the general moral and religious decay that engulfed England. This situation encouraged the establishment of small groups and societies (Religious Societies) to inspire Christian spirituality and piety.⁴⁵

Moreover, According to Heitzenrater, the restoration of the monarch and the reestablishment of the church brought in its wake the struggle for a unified Church. However, people who reacted against this idea (nonconformists) were allowed to legally exist to practice their faith without subscribing to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England⁴⁶.

I have noted that as the effects of this moral decay and ‘spiritual lethargy’ reigns in the days of Wesley, scientific and rational speculations were speedily gaining grounds over matters of faith at the same time. The scientific development created a fertile ground for the industrial revolution to take over from the traditional agricultural life. This booming industrialization brought its associated moral problems to families and individuals in that era. This new situation, however, encouraged the Puritans, Nonconformist, and Arminians to lay aside their different theological doctrines in order to forge a united front for the promotion of moral values and spirituality in the society⁴⁷. This initiative then enabled the import of pietistic sentiments from Europe to find a fertile soil in England to flourish. The pietistic spirit empowered the religious societies with the passion and the desire to spread genuine ‘holiness of heart and life.’⁴⁸

I have observed that one of the aims of the religious society was to fight against immorality in the society by transforming individual persons. And as at this time, in the 18th century, in Wesley’s time, the religious society’s work had resulted in the formation of Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK). The formation of SPCK inspired the development

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 8, 17

⁴⁷ Ibid. 19

⁴⁸ Ibid. 21

of local societies in different parts of Britain to promote individual holiness in the churches and society.⁴⁹

From the general description of Wesley's 18th century situation above, I can therefore say that Wesley lived in an era where personal piety, holiness of heart and life, and genuine Christian profession was in high demand, as the prevailing conditions showed that every facet of England- both private and public life and institutions were hit by moral decadence and spiritual laxity. It was no wonder Wesley's heart was set on fire for genuine Christian expression and true spirituality. A quest that led him to draw upon the experiences gained from his parents both from puritan background, and especially, from his father, a priest and member of SPCK. Wesley modelled his discipleship approach after that of SPCK, as he witnessed from his father and his involvement in SPCK as an active member. And as a result, Wesley's discipleship approach was tailored to help individuals love God with one's whole heart, strength, mind and life, and also love one another, as a genuine Christian profession.⁵⁰

2.3 Greg Ogden

I have read from the books and testimonies of Greg Ogden that his passion for discipleship has caused him to spend his entire adult working life in living and doing discipleship. According to him, his days as a pastor were used to disciple others, write about and teach discipleship, and now continues to speak and train people to be disciples of Jesus, so that they can as well train others to follow Jesus.⁵¹

Ogden is an American who has spent 24 years as a pastor in Presbyterian churches. And from there he became the Director of the Doctor of Ministry Programme at Fuller Theological Seminary and Associate Professor of Lay Equipping and Discipleship from 1998-2002.⁵² Ogden served as Senior Pastor at the Saratoga Federated Church in the Silicon Valley, California, where he designed and developed a discipleship programme, which was used by over 15000 people. As a result of this programme, Ogden has produced the book *Discipleship Essentials*, and the eventual Essentials Series. In total, Ogden has authored five books: *Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (Zondervan, 2003), *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (InterVarsity Press, 2003), *Discipleship Essentials: A guide to Building Your Life in Christ* (InterVarsity Press, 1998,

⁴⁹ Ibid. 1995. pp. 21-25

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ About Greg: available at www.gregogden.com

⁵² About Greg: available at www.gregogden.com

released in 2007; co-authored with Daniel Meyer, *Leadership Essentials: Shaping Vision, Multiplying Influence, Defining Character* (InterVarsity Press, 2007) and finally, *The Essential Commandment: A Guide to loving God and Others* (InterVarsity Press, 2011)⁵³

Greg Ogden most recently served Christ Church of Oak Brook, IL as Executive Pastor of Discipleship. And in March 2012, Ogden retired from professional church leadership. He now enjoys doing what he loves to do by teaching, writing and speaking about the disciple-making mandate of the church.⁵⁴

Ogden has been married to Lily for 43 years.⁵⁵

2.4 Greg Ogden's Context

Greg Ogden lives in the 21st century where, according to him, many warnings, projections, or predictions of the previous century are being realized.⁵⁶ Ogden further asserts that the 20th century devote Christian preachers and writers predicted that American Christians were “one generation away from losing the memory of Christianity in American culture.” This assertion or prediction was made in the 20th century, by Francis Schaeffer and Elton Trueblood, based on the prevailing factors of that era, signifying that American Christians have been cut from their Judeo-Christian root, making them to live on the memory of faith.⁵⁷ This therefore means that moral values in this generation have been degraded and given over to people's wishes and feelings. My impression of contemporary life tells me that there is a significant surge for exotic spiritual experiences in our culture today, while Christian spirituality has been relegated from the main social and national platforms to the back stage.

Today, in as much as the Christian Church in America and the world at large are recording many encouraging church growth statistics, the true nature of the life of the church leaves much to be desired. Unfortunately, according to Ogden, growth comes without depth because many members of the Christian church are still babes in Christ.⁵⁸ The impact of this situation is telling as research (the 80/20 rule) shows that about 20 percent of members of a church in America actually serve the 80 percent of the members who go to church to enjoy the efforts of the few. Similar result is recorded in terms of the giving patterns of the church in America.⁵⁹

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ogden. 2003:434. Kindle Edition

⁵⁷ Ogden. 2003:434. Kindle Edition

⁵⁸ Ogden. 2003:220. Kindle Edition

⁵⁹ Ogden. 2003:250. Kindle Edition

This trend then contributes to the continuous decline in the spiritual and moral fabric of our time.

Ogden claims that he lives in an era where the church is chalking many successes in terms of growth without transformation in the life of the members. Today, Ogden observed that the Christian is consistently compromised at the core. And sadly, the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian with respect to life-style choices and moral values is little.⁶⁰ Generally, the church is seen to be a club where one has to know and accept Christ as the saviour, know the right doctrines, and be assured of eternal life, without any need of transformation in the day to day life of the person. In addition, Ogden observed that church leaders have given a thump up to the fact that it is acceptable to be a Christian without being a disciple of Jesus⁶¹. And it is no surprise that the church now equate tolerance to grace.

Moreover, once the church has generally accepted the tendency of a person becoming a Christian without genuine discipleship, biblical illiteracy grows high as church growth figures swell up. The above situation then produces Christians of the 21st century who become disconnected from their mandate as agents of God with regards to who they are, where they are and what they do. And faith has now been reduced to a private matter. The effect of the above factors, again, I believe, has caused the church to be deeply engulfed in the consumer life style of the 21st century culture. The church has adopted the programmed type of discipleship where transfer of information becomes the goal, and seeking to synchronize a particular content together in order to prepare the many that come to church and get them in line. This culture in the church will therefore require low accountability from members.

Ogden's description of the 21st century climate above, in my opinion, seems to show that there is a huge need for true Christian spirituality, moral expression, transformation and an empowered life in our generation. And Ogden asserts that he lives in this context and seeks to structure his discipleship approaches to address the aforementioned needs.

⁶⁰Ogden. 2007:7-8

⁶¹Ibid.

Chapter Three

Theology of Discipleship

In this chapter, a general brief note on the theology of discipleship in the New Testament and the theology of discipleship of both Wesley and Ogden will be presented. In other words, this chapter will briefly deal with the following sub-topics theology of discipleship in New Testament, what is Wesley's theology of discipleship? What is Ogden's theology of discipleship?

3.1 Brief on Theology of Discipleship in the New Testament

Discipleship, as used in the New Testament can be described in two ways. The first denotes a narrow sense usage as to follow someone. That is, a student that follows his/her teacher. So, we see the four canonical gospels speaking of the disciples of John the Baptist.⁶² We also read Matthew and Mark talking about the disciples of the Pharisees (22:16 and 2:18 respectively), and John recording about the disciples of Moses (9:28).

In the broader sense, Fernando F. Segovia, in *Discipleship in the New Testament* points out that discipleship should be understood "in terms of Christian existence," that is, "the self-understanding of the early Christian believers as believers: what such a way of life requires, implies and entails."⁶³ I agree with Segovia's assertion above with the reason that a closer reading of the Gospels and the New Testament books outside the Gospels reveals such a general pattern of discipleship in the New Testament.

My reading of the Gospels alludes more to the narrow sense of discipleship than the broader meaning. However, in spite of the broader sense of discipleship found outside the Gospels, I am of the view that a disciple in the New Testament is primarily linked to the relationship between Jesus and his followers, and consequently denotes a life of faith. In this wise, a disciple (mathetes), according to Collins Brown, "is one who has heard the call of Jesus and joins him."⁶⁴

Moreover, all the four gospels, though coherent and independent whole, each admit a peculiar depiction of discipleship, and employs the phrase "to follow or following" Jesus as an authentic description of discipleship (Mathew 4:19, Mark 2:14, Luke 5:27, and John 1:43.)

⁶² Matt 9:14; 11:2; 14:12; Mark 2:18; Luke 5: 33, 7:18-19; 11:1; John 1:35, 37; 3:25; 4:1.

⁶³ Segovia, Fernando, F. (1985) *Discipleship in the New Testament*. Fortress Press. U.S.A

⁶⁴ Brown, Collins. 1975 *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Volume 1: A-F. p840.

They all agree that Jesus is the one that calls people to believe in him as the Messiah, and he also calls people to believe in God (John 12: 44; Matthew 4: 18-22). Jesus in the gospels, also calls people to render their complete allegiance to him, so that unflinching commitment to him is what makes one a disciple of Jesus. This commitment is demanded from his disciples, even at the expense of their lives (Matthew 8: 20-22, 16: 24-25, 10: 38-39, 16: 24-26) Again, in the gospels, Jesus called upon his disciples to abandon their old lives and walk in a new specific way-his way of life. This therefore means that he calls them into a life of transformation. In this way, they were also called to undertake service to people, that is, doing the things he did to people. And more importantly, he called them into a relationship with him so that they will become his brothers, friends he will become their Lord. They will walk with him in a new community of believers, who will be transformed and empowered to continue his mission in the world. And in light of this, to be a disciple of Jesus in the gospel is to be filled with a sense of a mission to fulfil (Matthew 28: 18-20)

The broader description of discipleship in the New Testament, as mentioned above, is clearly observed outside the Gospels. Segovia, asserts that the use of the phrase “to follow” Jesus with respect to understanding the way and life of Christian discipleship is rarely seen in the books of the New Testament, apart from the Gospels. He further reveals that it appears once in Revelation 14: 4, where it talks about “to follow the Lamb”. And, the use of its similar expression- “following in his steps,” is also observed in 1 Peter 2:21.⁶⁵

On the one hand, according to Segovia, the word “imitation,” remains the more frequent word that describes authentic life of Christian discipleship outside the four gospels.⁶⁶ He further states that

it not only the imitation of Jesus but also that of Paul, as well as of other believers and group of believers, that is used to describe the central thrust of Christian living: a surrendering of all personal prerogatives, including those that would spare suffering and death, and a trusting in God instead for ultimate vindication and exaltation.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Segovia, Fernando, F. (1985) *Discipleship in the New Testament*. Fortress Press. U.S.A. pp18-19.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 1985.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 1985.

In the Gospel, Jesus was present physically with the disciples and they had a deep relationship with him as he teaches the scriptures, performs acts of service, and obeyed the will of his Father in all deeds, actions and life. It is therefore necessary that one follows him as a disciple as he alone is the way, the truth and life (John 14: 6). And he alone has words of eternal life (John 6: 68). However, outside the Gospel, Jesus' presence was no longer bodily, and the new language of imitation (Phil 1: 27, 2-3; 18; 1 Corinthians 11: 1, 4; 16; Gal 4: 12; Eph 5: 1; Heb 6: 12), among others, was used to describe the Christian life.

In light of the above, Charles H. Talbert points out that in Acts, a disciple is a believer in Christ (6:1-2, 7; 9:10, 26; 11:26; 15:10; 6:1.)⁶⁸ And Taking Luke-Acts as a whole, various descriptions of discipleship are encountered. He therefore asserts that it “involves a detachment from all other allegiance and a total allegiance to Jesus (Luke 14: 26-27)”. However, since the death of Jesus ended the practice of a bodily walking with Jesus, the language of “following” was seldom used outside the Gospel. And the new language chosen “involves repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus (Acts 2: 38)” It also “involves submission to the will and purpose of the living Lord, whose power is irresistible (Acts 9: 1-19; 22: 6-16)”⁶⁹

In sum, I do agree with Segovia that belief in Jesus Christ becomes the solid ground of discipleship, and that this belief encompass a very distinctive style on the part of the believers. So that this way of life distinctively models after the life and ministry of Jesus.⁷⁰

3.2 John Wesley's Theology of Discipleship

In order to grasp a proper understanding of Wesley's theology of discipleship, this study will consider Wesley's concept of discipleship prior to and after his Aldersgate experience.

I believe as John Wesley before Aldersgate pursues the call to follow God, he became convinced that the Christian life is a complete devotion or dedication and consecration to the will of God. This conviction came to light as the young Wesley (in 1725, 23 years of age) read Bishop Taylor's *Rule and Exercise of Holy Living and Holy Dying*, and said in a sermon, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* in 1872 that

⁶⁸ Ibid. pp 62-63

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 1985. p18.

In reading several parts of this book, I was exceedingly affected; that part in particular which relates to purity of intention. Instantly, I resolved to dedicate all my life to God, all my thoughts, and words, and actions; being thoroughly convinced, there was no medium; but that every part of my life (not some only) must either be a sacrifice to God, or myself, that is in effect, to the devil.⁷¹

About three years after this, Wesley read Mr. Law's *Christian Perfection and Serious Call* and again became more convinced than ever that he needs not be a half Christian and then became determined through grace to be all-devoted to God, "to give him all my soul, my body and my substance,"⁷² in the words of Wesley. In view of the above, one can assert that the young Wesley understood a Christian to be a person that fully dedicates and consecrates his/her self and life to conform to the will of God. With the above notion, Wesley in 1729 became a man of one book, the Bible. This means that Wesley considered the Bible to be "the only standard of truth, and only model of pure religion"⁷³ and began to devote his attention to read and study the Bible. From this study, Wesley developed a remarkable understanding of who a Christian is, by expanding and polishing his former understanding of a Christian. After Wesley becoming a student of the Bible, he penned

Hence, I saw, in a clearer and clearer light, the indispensable necessity of having "the mind which was in Christ," and of "walking as Christ also walked;" even of having, not some part only, but all the mind which was in him; and of walking as he walked, not only in many or most respects, but in all things. And this was the light, wherein at this time I generally considered religion, as a uniform following of Christ, an entire inward and outward conformity to our Master.⁷⁴

In other words, Wesley contends that religion in this context (discipleship) signifies a uniform following of Christ whereby the Christian's internal life (that is a person's soul and spirit) and external life (that is a person's deeds, behaviour and attitudes) conform to the life and works of Christ. On the other hand, I believe the big question that still lingers on in Wesley's quest to being a Christian is how can one achieve this lofty Christian status he has found in the

⁷¹Thomas Jackson, ed., *The works of John Wesley* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), Loc.431-450

⁷² *Ibid.*, Loc.458

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Loc.467

Bible? In spite of this daunting question lingering on, it is this aforementioned understanding of a Christian that became Wesley's core and vital comprehension of the Christian enterprise, worth pursuing and dying for, both spiritually and practically or experientially. Moreover, the knowledge above became the bedrock of Wesley's theology of discipleship as he went on to develop it in detail by exploring different parts of this core belief, such as the faith of a son and the faith of a servant, the religion of the heart, Christian sanctification (developing the image and mind of Christ), and obedience to the moral law and works of mercy, just to mention but a few. Consequently, it is this knowledge or concept of a disciple that underlines the main doctrinal motifs of the Methodist as Wesley sought to pursue and preach.

Wesley's intellectual or theoretical concept regarding a disciple as above led to his conclusion that the end or goal of religion (discipleship) is holiness. And as a result of this notion, Wesley resorted to the use of rules and resolutions in his bid to translate his theoretical concept of a Christian into an experiential life that will lead him to a life of holiness. Unfortunately for Wesley, the more he sincerely pursued holiness through his rules and resolutions, the more he falls short of the mark of holiness in his Christian life. In light of this, Wesley became compelled to reassess his widely-held assumptions or knowledge about the Christian life in 1.02. 1738, and came to a striking conclusion that he could not tell whether he was converted to God or not.

In addition, Wesley felt he was not a real Christian.⁷⁵ Put in another way, I can say that Wesley sincerely concluded from this reflection that in spite of his sound intellectual knowledge of who is a Christian, and subsequent honest adherence to his strict rules and resolutions, he still lacked holiness, a distinctive mark of a Christian or a disciple of Christ.⁷⁶ And by this conviction, Wesley further stated that what he had was the faith of a servant, and not that of a son. According to Wesley, by having the faith of a servant, his life was full of fear and doubt, coupled with constantly falling prey to the power of sin. Hence, the lack of holiness in his life. Wesley expressed this to William Law

If you say you advised them because you knew I had faith already, verily, you know nothing of me, you discerned not my spirit at all. I know that I had not faith. Unless the faith of a devil, the faith of a Judas, that speculative, notional, airy shadow which lives in the head, not the heart. But

⁷⁵ Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 18:214-15

⁷⁶Ibid.

what is this to the living, justifying faith in the blood of Jesus. the faith that cleanseth from all sin, that gives us to have free access to the Father, to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.⁷⁷

From this assertion, I may posit that by Wesley discovering and acknowledging what he lacks in his Christian life, he remarkably demonstrates that all he has been longing for was to have the faith of a son by which he noted in his journal that this sort of faith will provide him a sure trust and confidence in God, that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven, so that he is reconciled to the favour of God.⁷⁸ For Wesley, when one has the faith of a son, there is that conviction that one has it because it frees the person from the power of sin. In other words, the faith of a son provides the bearer with an assurance of salvation and freedom over the power of sin. In retrospect, Wesley's analysis with respect to his concept of a disciple and its attainment reveals that he has been a Christian with the faith of a servant from 1725 to the early days of 1738, but this faith failed to make him a proper Christian. It must be noted here that Wesley uses words like real, true, proper, whole Christian and other times a Methodist to differentiate between a nominal Christian (people who call themselves Christians but neither follow Christ nor live like him) and a Christian who is also a disciple of Jesus (one that repents and believes in Christ and lives and does things like him).

As a result of Wesley's assertions above, I can assert that the efficacy of his notion of who is a Christian, a view that motivated and spurred him on to a sincere journey for holiness since 1725, now hangs on a view of how to be a Christian or a disciple of Christ, just before his Aldersgate experience, in 1738. It must be noted that the result of his retrospective analysis of his Christian life from 1725 to the early days of 1738, as observed above has revealed that Wesley realized that his inability to attain holiness was due to not having a proper knowledge of saving faith or not placing his faith on Christ as the only right object for salvation.⁷⁹

Fortunately for Wesley, a few days to his Aldersgate encounter, he encountered Peter Bohler⁸⁰ whose teachings coupled with Wesley's rigorous study of the scripture led him to understand that salvation comes by faith alone in Christ. In other words, one becomes a Christian only on the merits of Christ (the finished work of Christ on the Cross). According to Collins, Wesley further came to understand that such a saving faith brings holiness, that is freedom from the

⁷⁷ Baker, Frank (1980) *The Works of John Wesley. Vol.25. Letters.* Clarendon Press Oxford, pp541-542

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 18., pp215-16

⁷⁹ *Ibid*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 18. p223

power of sin, and happiness, that is peace and joy that emerge from a sense of forgiveness.⁸¹ Moreover, this salvation brings a qualitative change in a person that only God's grace can offer. More importantly, Wesley became enlightened that this saving faith and the salvation it brings as well as the holiness and happiness can be attained instantly.⁸² But one has to first repent and believe in Christ for salvation without which one will remain a nominal Christian, however well the intentions of the person or sincerity and diligence in use of the means of grace and service in the church. Wesley in support of the assertions above concluded in a letter to William Law that his faith up until Aldersgate was "speculative, notional, airy shadow which lives in the head, not the heart,"⁸³ in spite of all he believed, pursued, practiced and preached.

To this wise, one can say that Wesley now believed that a person has to *repent* and believe in Christ by *faith*, and by *faith* follows Christ as a disciple whereby that person becomes transformed and empowered to become an agent of change and transformation. And this manifest as he/she lives a *holy life* personally and socially in a visible form in a community. I can say that this understanding led to the development of Wesley's concept of salvation as comprising of *justification*, *sanctification*, and *glorification*, achieved only by the grace of God.

In short, Wesley before Aldersgate maintained that a disciple or a true Christian is one that follows Christ so that the person's entire inward and outward life conforms to the life of Christ. But, unknowingly, Wesley lacked the proper understanding of how to be a Christian and so felt that conformity to the will of God or life of Christ is gained through honest adherence to his strict rules and resolutions. But all that he gained was establishing his own righteousness characterized by repeated dominance of sin in his life. This, Wesley observed that his spirit was in a state of "strange indifference, dullness, and coldness, and unusually frequent relapses into sin"⁸⁴ in the days just before his Aldersgate encounter.

In view of this, I can therefore assert that Wesley's life before Aldersgate was a life that did not recognize God as a loving father, who welcomes and equips one to live a life that conforms to his will in love. Rather, Wesley lived in a state of constant fear of God as a superior that demanded conformity to his will in compulsion. Though, Wesley had all the

⁸¹ Collins, J. Kenneth (2003) *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*. Abingdon Press. Nashville. pp.82-83

⁸²Ibid. 2003.

⁸³ Frank, Baker, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*. Vol.25, *Letters I* (New York: Oxford University Press), 541-41

⁸⁴Ibid. 18. 249

intellectual doctrine of who is a disciple right but it only resides actively in his mind, and not in his heart.

At Aldersgate, Wesley noted in his diary that he participated in a society meeting in Aldersgate Street where ‘Luther’s Epistle to the Romans’⁸⁵ was being read on May 24, 1738. According to Wesley, as the reader was describing the change that God instils into the heart through faith in Christ, “I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my sins*, even *mine*, and *saved me* from the law of sin and death”⁸⁶ in Wesley’s own expression. Wesley, therefor, noted that the Aldersgate experience gave him victory over the power of sin and there he experienced the assurance of salvation that has eluded him for so long a time. Here, Wesley felt he has been regenerated and was born again. Additionally, Wesley observed that the Aldersgate experience provided him peace with God.

In view of the above, Wesley observed the difference between his Christian life before Aldersgate that he was striving and fighting with all his strength under the law, and living under the grace at the same time. And because of that he was sometimes, if not often, conquered, but now after Aldersgate, he was conquering.⁸⁷ It is no surprise that Wesley will project his victory over sin as such a significant turning point in his Christian experience worth emphasizing. It can be recalled from this study that Wesley grounded holiness as the goal of the Christian enterprise. And sought to achieve this purpose by his sincere use of rules and resolution, which still could not secure him holiness, and became a point of worry in his quest for authentic Christian expression. But at Aldersgate, Wesley experienced the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart and acknowledged that without the witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart of a person, no one can become a Christian.⁸⁸ This research therefore observes that Wesley’s understanding of a Christian after Aldersgate now vividly acknowledges the integral work of the Holy Spirit, as well as the grace of God and the work of Christ on the Cross.

In light of this, a Christian is a person who repents and believes in Christ and receives the Holy Spirit provided by the grace of God such that the person is assured of salvation and has victory over the power of sin. Wesley, therefore, asserts that the marks of this new birth are *faith, hope and love*.

⁸⁵ Collins J. Kenneth (2003), *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*. Abingdon Press. Nashville. pp 89-90 provides insightful remarks about Luther’s Epistle to the Romans.

⁸⁶ Word and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 18:249-50

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 18:250

⁸⁸ Jackson, *Works*, 8:276-293

In effect, Wesley's aforementioned concept of a Christian coupled with his personal experience of the Holy Spirit at Aldersgate brought about the successes in the field preaching and the revival in the 18th century Britain. And to this effect, Wesley noted that "the Word of God ran" as fire among the stubble; it was "glorified" more and more; multitudes cried out, "What must we do to be saved?"⁸⁹ As a result of this, Wesley recognized an opportunity for making disciples of Jesus, and therefore went ahead to put them into society, class and band meetings for the grace of God to produce repentance, faith and holiness in the life of the people.

3.3 Greg Ogden's Theology of Discipleship

Greg Ogden, in analysing the state of discipleship today, in his book *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*, asserts "if I were to choose one word to summarize the state of discipleship today, that word would be superficial."⁹⁰ In elucidating, Ogden noted that generally, many people who claim Jesus as their saviour seem to lack comprehension as to the ramifications of following Jesus as Lord.⁹¹ According to Ogden, the aforementioned reflection was observed when church growth statistic depicts an encouraging growth of the 21st century Christian church.⁹² However, Ogden's analysis of the Christian profession landed on a sad and worrying note that in spite of this growth, there is no impact on the moral and spiritual life of our time, due to the reason that many of these Christians are babies in Christ. This apparent incongruity, therefore, leads Ogden to ask How can Christian leaders moan over the moral decline of our society while so many people have indicated a meaningful encounter with Jesus Christ?⁹³ Ogden further ascribe the superficiality in our discipleship to the notion that a gap exist between Christian communities and the biblical standard that ought to govern our life. This therefore calls for reflections on our comprehension of a biblical concept of a disciple or Christian and our approaches to discipleship.

In view of the above, Ogden asserts that a disciple is the person, who in the context of community, subjects himself or herself under the shaping influence of Jesus such that Jesus is

⁸⁹ Davies, Rupert, E. (1989) *The Works of John Wesley*. Vol.9. The Methodist Societies, History, Nature, and Design. Abingdon Press. Nashville. pp222-223.

⁹⁰Ogden, Greg (2003) *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*. Kindle Edition. InterVasity Press. Downers Grove. p.22

⁹¹Ogden, 2003.

⁹² Barna Research Online, "Born-Again Christians", research archives www.barna.org. And The Gallup Organization, Religion, "Would you describe yourself as 'born-again' or evangelical?" www.gallup.com

⁹³ Ibid. 2003. p.23

vividly observed to be the deployer of the transformative power. This therefore, stands to mean that a disciple willingly places him/herself under the authority and Lordship of Jesus to be transformed by Jesus so that Jesus becomes Lord in the person's heart, home and work place. And the effect of the above is that in "every area of the person's interior life, personal relationships or social involvement," he/she will "seek to know and live the mind and will of God."⁹⁴ In the end, a disciple of Jesus becomes "the one who is self-initiating, reproducing and fully devoted to him."⁹⁵ However, this calls for one to remain at the feet of Jesus in obedience in order to be conformed to the life of Jesus. In this regard, Ogden contends that a Christian is an apprentice of Jesus who acknowledges Jesus as his or her Lord, discipler, teacher and trainer.⁹⁶

Moreover, Ogden noted elsewhere that there is no biblical distinction between being a Christian and a disciple because the book of Acts demonstrates that the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch (Acts 11:26) Therefore, one receives the gift of salvation from Jesus and blessed with the Holy Spirit to become a Christian, which then means that, the person has become a disciple of Jesus as the person continues to be self-initiating, reproducing and fully devoted to Jesus. In view of this, I believe that people must be intentionally and personally discipled in order to achieve the goal above.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 2003. pp.27-28, 37, 46

⁹⁶ Ibid. p.47

Chapter Four

Discipleship Approaches

This chapter will deal with discipleship approaches of both John Wesley and Greg Ogden. The chapter will therefore present, first, John Wesley's approach of discipleship and then Gregg Ogden's approach of discipleship.

4.1 Discipleship Approach of John Wesley

John Wesley's main discipleship approach is observed to be the use of society meeting, band meeting and class meeting. In view of this, Henderson asserts that in Methodism, the society meetings targeted cognitive instruction, the class meeting provided a congenial platform for behavioural change, and the band aimed at affective redirection.⁹⁷ In this section of the thesis, I will discuss the aforementioned approaches.

4.1.1 The Methodist Society Meeting

Even though, John Wesley participated in the life and the formation of several religious societies in London, Bristol and other places, such as Georgia, the distinctive Methodist Society which fully embodied Wesley's unique theology and discipleship approaches was first established in December 1739 in London. I have observed that Wesley described the formation of Methodist societies as that eight or ten people who seemed to be convinced of sin, and earnestly desiring for redemption came to him in the latter part of the year 1739, while he was in London.⁹⁸ They asked that Wesley spends some time with them in prayer, and to instruct them to "flee from the wrath to come, which they saw was continually hanging over their heads."⁹⁹ Responding to this need, Wesley formed the United Society, first in London before establishing Methodist Societies in other places. Furthermore, Wesley stated the purpose of these society meetings as "a company of men having the form, and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."¹⁰⁰ Here, we observe that Wesley realized that the Christian enterprise is well lived and practiced in a community of believers.

⁹⁷ Henderson, D., Michael (1997) *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A model for making Disciples*. Evangel Publishing House. U.S.A. Loc.1788

⁹⁸ Davies. 1989. p69

⁹⁹ Ibid. 1989

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 1989. p.69

In another word, Wesley recognized that the Christian culture thrives best as a social life rather than making it a private and individual life. The Methodist society became the group which embraced all Methodist found in a locality. Henderson, therefore, asserts that the “Methodist society was the focal point of group identification,”¹⁰¹ This therefore calls for mutual accountability and relationships that are govern by love. The primary motif for the Methodist societies can be said to be that of instructing (teaching) the people essential truths of the Christian culture (mostly of cognitive dimensions of instructions), as one infers from the purpose Wesley provided above.

The physical arrangement of this meeting was about fifty audience or more. This therefore required the use of lecture, preaching, hymn singing, public reading, and exhortation methods in delivering message to the congregation. I have also observed that the teachings of the society meeting became the central operational tool for the other meetings.

The nature of the Methodist society was general and opened to everyone that desires for fellowship with God and his people. The Methodist society meeting welcomed everyone, irrespective of their social status and economic situations. This all-inclusive nature of the society meeting embraced all those that were marginalized and excluded from participating in the church of England by virtue of their social class and economic situations, among other things, to find a spiritual home and a covenant community to belong. It is also in the general society meeting that the band meeting found a home to operate because the society served as an ‘umbrella’ which contains all other relevant groups under its jurisdiction. This society also contains an administrative system which embraced lay assistance, stewards, and trustees to serve the various vital functions of the society such as finance, distribution of goods to the needy, care of the facilities and properties of the society, just to mention but a few.

The Methodist society met several times in a week for worship and instruction. However, Sunday evening meetings became the highlight of the society’s life, as it was a major evangelistic tool for recruiting people to the Methodist societies. As it were, the Methodist society became attractive to the working-class people. The society meeting again, conducted service early in the morning where Wesley admonished the workers before they left for work.

¹⁰¹ Henderson, D., Michael (1997) *John Wesley’s Class Meeting: A model for making Disciples*. Evangel Publishing House. U.S.A. Loc.1282

4.1.2 The Class Meeting

Since the aim of the Methodist Society was to help members work out their own salvation by grace through the Spirit of God, Wesley contended that each Society was divided into small groups known as ‘Classes,’ with respect to locations of residence of members.¹⁰² I have observed that every Methodist society member became an active member of the class meeting, a refusal of which one ceases to be a member of the society. The class meeting originally came to being, in early 1742, as a suggested way of soliciting for funds from members of the Society to defray the debt on property the Society held in Bristol.¹⁰³ However, Wesley seized the opportunity to make the class meeting a means of making disciples of Jesus. To this respect, Henderson noted that “whereas the society was an instrument for cognitive acquisition, almost to the exclusion of any interpersonal dynamics, the class meeting was a tool for the alteration of behaviour, to the virtual exclusion of any data-gathering function.”¹⁰⁴ The class meeting made up of mixed genders of heterogeneous in age, spiritual readiness and social status. It also served as an entry point for most of the converts who will be initiated into becoming Methodist. Due to this nature, the class meeting is noted to present an enabling platform for people from different social orientations to freely express themselves. Each class constituted about five to twelve members, with one of them as the leader of the class, be it male or female. Wesley noted the function of the leader as

1. To see each person in his class once a week, at least; in order
 - To receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the poor
 - To inquire how their souls prosper
 - To advice, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion require.
2. To meet the minister and the stewards of the Society once a week, in order
 - To pay in to the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding
 - To show their account of what each person has contributed; and
 - To inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly and will not be reproved.¹⁰⁵ (Bulleting added)

¹⁰²Ibid. 1989. p69

¹⁰³ Church, Leslie, F. (1948) *The Early Methodist People*. Epworth Press. London. p. 155.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 1997. Loc.1519

¹⁰⁵Ibid. 1989, p.69-70

I have noted that by the virtue of the class meeting system, leadership training was emphasized in such a manner that everyone could be a class leader, irrespective of a person's social standing, education or talent. A person's diligence, honesty, 'faithfulness and care for people alone can make one a leader.'¹⁰⁶

Henderson, further asserts that the class meeting begins with a short hymn, promptly at the stipulated time, followed by leader pouring out his or her vulnerability (the condition of the leader's own spiritual life). The leader further provides a brief testimonial regarding the previous week's experience, thanks God for growth and shares honestly, any failures, temptations, inner battles, sins or griefs.¹⁰⁷ By such role modelling venture of the leader, the rest of the members found it encouraging to follow suit. Personal experience of the espoused truth of scriptures in the society meeting, becomes the subject matter of the class meeting, so that personal holiness remains the goal of the meeting or for members to assume the character of Christ.¹⁰⁸ To buttress the above, Wesley contended that the chief purpose of the class meeting was to discern whether members of the Methodist Society "are indeed working out their own salvation."¹⁰⁹ And to be able to help members to continue to live and do life as born-again Christians.

Wesley further pointed out that exhibiting the following three characteristics below demonstrate the fruits of a Christian salvation. "Firstly, By doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind". In providing explanations to this statement above, Wesley pointed out some general practices such as drunkenness, fighting, speaking evil of others, taking the name of God in vain, and doing to others what we will not want to be done to us, among several other practices. "Secondly, By doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their powers, as they have opportunity doing good of every possible sort and as far as is possible to all men." Here, too, Wesley outlined such practices as providing for both the physical and spiritual needs of the needy, especially to believers who have different needs and at different degrees of needy in our communities. Finally, "By attending upon all the ordinances of God." Such as public worship services of God, the holy communion, family and personal devotions, and studying the Scriptures, as well as undertaking fasting and abstinence.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 1997. Loc.1589

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 1997. 1562

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 1997. Loc.1561-1580

¹⁰⁹ Davies. 1989. Vol.9. p.69

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 1989. pp.71-73

Henderson summarizes the significance of the class meeting as center of the transformative methodology of the Methodist in the following ten outlines

1. It furnished the environment in which cognitive concepts could be experimentally or experientially tested.
2. It served as a purging or pruning instrument to keep “dead wood” out of the society.
3. It was a training ground for leaders
4. It was a point of entry capable of incorporating large numbers of new people quickly.
5. It financed the movement through penny collections.
6. Its accounting system provided a constant and immediate record of the strength and size of the movement.
7. It forced 100 percent mobilization and participation of membership.
8. It gave every member a voice in the affairs of Methodism.
9. It allowed people to practice speaking their inner feelings.
10. It provided the milieu for resolving conflicts within the society by immediate face-to-face confrontation.¹¹¹

In short, one can argue that since Wesley viewed holiness as the end of religion, he practically structured all his discipleship approaches to help his followers embrace a life of holiness by following Jesus. As result of this, Henderson, therefore, argues that to Wesley, holiness consisted both of outward uprightness or ethical morality and inward purity or “perfect love.” This therefore motivated the manner Wesley designed his discipleship systems to project holiness as the cardinal point in following Jesus. Thus, while the societies proclaimed and explained the tenets of the Christian faith or the doctrine of the Methodist, the class meeting was crafted to implement the behavioural quest for holy lifestyle.”¹¹²

4.1.3 The Band Meeting

According to Davies, Wesley’s band meetings predated the society and class meetings. And I have observed that before Wesley established his distinctive Methodist Society, he made use of the band meetings wherever he finds people who desired for an intimate relationship with Christ in a society. The bands can therefore be said to be established to aid the cultivation of inner purity and the purging of the attitudes of members. I have noted that Wesley adopted the

¹¹¹ Ibid. 1997. Loc.1744-1754

¹¹² Ibid. 1997. Loc.1837-1847

idea of the bands from the Moravians and modified it to suit his concept of who is a Christian. And the first-place Wesley experimented the bands was in Georgia, under the Savannah and Frederica religious societies.¹¹³ Wesley formed the bands for the most serious members of the society in order for a more intimate fellowship with each other.

This band was a small group gender, age, and marital status based gathering that met three times per week in America. It was a voluntary group of people showing a vivid Christian commitment and a particular interest to “grow in love, holiness and purity of intentions.” The aim was to reach the heart of the members such that their emotions, attitudes, feelings, affections and intentions would be improved.¹¹⁴ John Wesley, again introduced the band project to the Fetter Lane Society, after his return from America. And seeing the significant role the band meeting will play in a person’s quest for authentic relationship with Christ, Wesley enacted the *Rule of the Band Societies* on 25th December 1738. To appreciate the depth of the band meeting, a detail account of it is provided below.

Before Wesley enumerated the rules, he provided a clear and detailed purpose, instructions and directions of the meeting and how it was to be conducted. In view of this, Wesley begun by saying that “the design of our meeting is to obey that command, Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed.”¹¹⁵ A person desiring to be a member of the band is asked the following eleven questions

1. Have you the forgiveness of your sins?
2. Have you peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ?
3. Have you the witness of God’s Spirit with your spirit that you are a child of God?
4. Is the love of God shared abroad in your heart?
5. Has no sin, inward or outward, dominion over you?
6. Do you desire to be told of your faults?
7. Do you desire to be told of all your faults, and that plain and home?
8. Do you desire that every one of us should tell you from time to time whatsoever is in his/her heart concerning you?

¹¹³ Davies, Rupert, E., (1989) *The Works of John Wesley: The Methodist Societies, History, Nature, and Design*. Vol.9. Abingdon Press Nashville. P.9

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 1997. Loc.1788

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 1989. pp.77-78

9. Consider! Do you desire we should tell you whatsoever we think, whatsoever we fear, whatsoever we hear, concerning you?
10. Do you desire that in doing this we should come as close as possible, that we should cut to the quick, and search your heart to the bottom?
11. Is it your desire and design to be on this and all other occasions to be entirely open, so as to speak everything that is in your heart, without exception, without disguise, and without reserve?¹¹⁶

It can be seen that the depth and stringent aforementioned questions above target directly the heart of a person in a manner that it takes only a serious person who is fully convinced of the Holy Spirit to dare to be a member of such spiritual investigative group. Wesley, by setting up this meeting calls the would-be Christian to a life of discipleship where grace produces commitment, dedication, and responsibility as well as openness which together form the essential entry pillars. Then after stating the goal of the bands using James 5:16, as above, Wesley contended that

To this end we intend:

1. To meet once a week, at the least
2. To come punctually at the hour appointed, without some extraordinary reasons.
3. To begin (those of us who are present) exactly at the hour, with singing or prayer.
4. To speak, each of us in order, freely and plainly the true state of our souls, with the faults we have committed in thought, word or deed, and the temptations we have felt since our last meeting.
5. To end every meeting with prayer, suited to the state of each person present.
6. To desire some person among us to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest in order as many as searching questions as may be concerning their state, sins, and temptations.¹¹⁷

The objectives above depict that Wesley had a clear vision and a practical road map of how he intends to bring this vision to life in a real meaningful and useful manner. He offered the members practical meaningful information about the meeting and the responsibilities of the

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

members. Furthermore, any of the following five questions below may be asked the members during the meeting, as often as the right opportunity crops up

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptations have you met with?
3. How was you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?
5. Have you nothing you desire to keep secret?¹¹⁸

In addition to the above, Wesley provided a set of three main rules with explanations to serve as a form of direction to members of the band societies. As a result of this, Wesley contends in 25th December 1744 that

You are supposed to have the ‘faith that overcometh the world’. To you therefore it is not grievous,

I. Carefully to abstain from doing evil; in particular,

1. Neither to buy nor sell anything at all on the Lord’s Day.
2. To taste no spirituous liquor, no dram of any kind, unless prescribed by a physician.
3. To be at a word both in buying and selling.
- 4 To paw nothing, no, not to save life.
5. Not to mention the fault of any behind his back, and to stop those short that do.
6. To wear no needless or ornaments, such as rings, ear-rings, necklaces, lace, ruffles.
7. To use no needless self-indulgence, such as taking snuff or tobacco, unless prescribed by a physician.

II. Zealously to maintain good works; in particular,

1. To give alms of such things as you possess, and that to the uttermost of your power.
2. To reprove all that sin in your sight, and that in love, and meekness of wisdom.
3. To be patterns of diligence and frugality, of self-denial, and taking up the cross daily.

III. Constantly to attend on all the ordinances of God; in particular,

1. To be at church, and at the Lord’s table, every week, and at every public meeting of the bands.
2. To attend the ministry of the Word every morning, unless distance, business, or sickness prevent.
3. To use private prayer every day, and family prayer if you are the head of a family.
4. To read the Scriptures, and meditate thereon, at every vacant hour. And,

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

To observe as days of fasting or abstinence all Fridays in the year.¹¹⁹

Again, the questions above indicate the sensitive and probing nature of the band meetings so that members will always be conscious of a life of holiness that is expected of them as Christians. Moreover, it could be said that the band seek to make plain the practical expectation that Christ seeks from the born-again Christian, who has been filled with power from on high. This then helps the Christian to avoid the tendency of being lethargic in their spiritual walk with Christ.

4.2 Discipleship Approach of Greg Ogden

Ogden believes that the primary and most productive “way to grow into self-initiating, reproducing, fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ is by being involved in highly accountable, relational, multiplying discipleship unit of three or four”. The reason being that to disciple a person encompasses a process that occurs within accountable relationships over a period of time for the goal of “bringing believers to spiritual maturity in Christ.”¹²⁰ As observed above, the church has to be intentional in creating a discipleship process in a “context of highly accountable, relationally transparent, truth-centered, small discipleship units.”¹²¹ Furthermore, this intentional discipleship process require a mentor or coach in order to succeed.

In his bid to actualize the concept of discipleship above, Ogden created a practical guide, tool or book called *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ*. This book has four parts,

The first part deals with the basics that a follower of Jesus needs to practice as spiritual disciplines. Under this part, Ogden noted that one has to know how to make disciples of Jesus, understand how one remains a disciple of Jesus, and one has to observe a daily quite time with God. He further asserts that Bible study, prayer and worship has to be part of the disciple, as basic tenants of the life of a disciple. This then is what Ogden calls ‘growing up in Christ.’¹²²

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 1989. p.79

¹²⁰ Ogden. 2003. p.54-55

¹²¹ Ogden, Greg (2003) *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*. Kindle Edition. InterVarsity Press. Downers Grove. pp.54-55

¹²² Ogden. 2007. p. 5-7

According to Ogden, the second part then deals with the items one has to comprehend as core biblical or theological truth. He calls this part, ‘understanding the message of Christ.’ And these items, according to Ogden, consist of the Holy Trinity, the image of God, sin, grace, redemption, justification and adoption.¹²³

Ogden contends that part three deals with becoming like Christ. And for this to happen, the core truth in part two should form the character, and life-style of the disciple. As a result, one has to be filled with the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The disciple should live a life of trust, love, justice, and witness.¹²⁴

Finally, service to God is the fourth part, according to Ogden. Here, he asserts that the disciple should live life that engages the church and the world. Under this part, one has to understand and participate in the life of the Church, understand and be available for ministry gifts, engages in spiritual warfare, walk in obedience and share one’s wealth.¹²⁵

In addition, Ogden contends that this tool produces three elements necessary for the creation of a conducive climate for the Holy Spirit to initiate accelerated growth in the disciple of Jesus. The first element, according to Ogden, is “the unchanging truth of God’s Word.” He believes that the Word of God as a ‘revealed truth’ is an objective truth which is true for all and that must permeate through morals and lifestyles of believers. In light of this, the book is built around a “core truth” for all, the reason being that God is for all and the source of this truth is God.¹²⁶

The second element is transparent relationship. Since human beings are created in the image of God to be in relationship with himself and with one another, everyone therefore craves for deep and satisfying relationships. According to Ogden, a safe small group setting provides a platform for members to learn to be intimate, open or self-revealing.¹²⁷ So that the Holy Spirit will enforce his transformative power by the use of God’s truth to shape and transform us into the image of Christ, as we reveal our vulnerability and confess to one another.

The last element is mutual accountability. According to Ogden, accountability allows a person to mandate a discipleship partner authority to call one to abide by the commitments one makes to another. This accountability is encouraged by the signing of a mutual covenant

¹²³ Ibid. 2007.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ogden. 2007. pp.6-7

¹²⁶ Ibid. 2007. p.8

¹²⁷ Ibid.

agreement by all members in a small group before the discipleship process begins.¹²⁸ Below is an example of a discipleship covenant

In order to grow toward maturity in Christ and complete *Discipleship Essentials*, I commit myself to the following standards:

1. Completes all assignments on weekly basis prior to my discipleship appointment in order to contribute fully.
2. Meet weekly with my discipleship partners for approximately one and one-half to dialogue over the content of the assignments.
3. Offer myself fully to the Lord with the anticipation that I am entering a time of accelerated transformation during this discipleship period.
4. Contribute to a climate of honesty, trust and personal vulnerability in a spirit of mutual upbuilding.
5. Give serious consideration to continuing the discipling chain by committing myself to invest in at least two other people for the year following the initial completion of *Discipleship Essentials*.
6. Signed:
7. Dated:

(Any other elements can be added)¹²⁹

According to Ogden, Discipleship Essentials can be applied in many different contexts such as “personal study, one-on-one, one-with-two or a discipleship group of ten”, over one or one-half hour period, for twenty-five sessions. Each lesson has the following components *Core Truth*- each lesson is built around the core truth. *Memory Verse*- this contains the Bible verse that will form part of the life of the members. *Inductive Bible Study*- this is where members study the Bible to understand the core truth and to allow it reality to fill the life of members through the power of God. And the last component is *Reading*- each lesson concludes with a printed reading that provides a contemporary discussion of the core truth that will stimulate members to think. Additionally, prayers form an integral part of each lesson where members

¹²⁸ Ogden, Greg (2007) *Discipleship Essentials: A guide to building Your Life in Christ*. Expanded Edition, Kindle. InterVarsity Press. Downers Grove. pp.7-10

¹²⁹ Ibid. pp.14

intercede for one another that the changes the Lord impresses on each one will take shape and form of their lives.¹³⁰

The group also has a leader who guides and takes part of the lesson assignments, as well as sharing his or her life to members. In addition, the leader functions to issue an “invitation to accountable relationship.”¹³¹ The leader describes the commitment and leads the would-be member to sign *The Discipleship’s Covenant*, and keeps the covenant. Finally, the leader functions to serve as group convener and guide. When the discipleship process goes through approximately one-quarter to one-third of the sessions, the members rotate the weekly guiding process of the lesson, such that members are equipped and prepared to lead the next generation.¹³²

The Discipleship Essential tool has the following content that covers the entire twenty-five sessions.¹³³

Part One: Growing Up in Christ

1. Making Disciples
2. Being a Disciple
3. Quiet Time
4. Bible Study
5. Prayer
6. Worship

Part Two: Understanding the Message of Christ

7. The Three-Person God
8. Made in God’s Image
9. Sin
10. Grace
11. Redemption
12. Justification
13. Adoption

Part Three: Becoming Like Christ

14. Filled with the Holy Spirit

¹³⁰ Ibid. pp.12-13

¹³¹ Ibid. pp.11-12

¹³² Ibid. pp.11-12

¹³³ Ibid. pp.5-6

15. Fruit of the Holy Spirit

16. Trust

17. Love

18. Justice

19. Witness

Part Four: Serving Christ

20. The Church

21. Ministry Gifts

22. Spiritual Warfare

23. Walking in Obedience

24. Sharing the Wealth

25. Money

A Sample of Ogden's Lesson on Making Disciples (Session 1)

Looking Ahead

Memory Verse: Matthew 28: 18-20

Bible Study: Luke 6:12-16; 9: 1-6, 10

Reading: A Biblical Call to Making Disciples

❖ Core Truth

What is discipleship?

Discipleship is an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturing in Christ. this includes equipping the disciple to teach others as well.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words
2. Restate the core truth in your own words.
3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?

❖ Memory Verse Study Guide

Jesus' mission statement for the church is to make disciples. These pivotal verses (Matthew 28: 18-20) are commonly referred to as the Great Commission.

1. Putting it in context: Read Matthew 28. What key events precedes Jesus' giving the Great Commission, and how would this have affected the disciples?
2. The memory verses are Matthew 28: 18-20. Copy these verses verbatim.
3. What do these verses teach as about Jesus?
4. Why does Jesus stress his authority (v.18) as a backdrop to his command to "make disciples"?
5. How is discipling to be carried out?
6. When is a disciple made?
7. How have these verses spoken to you this week?

❖ **Inductive Bible Study Guide**

Jesus always lived with a view to the end of his earthly ministry. The preparation of a few who would carry on his ministry after he has ascended to the Father was ever before him. This Bible study focuses on the training and transference of ministry to his selected disciples.

1. Read Luke 6:12-16; 9: 1-6, 10. What do you suppose Jesus included in his all-night prayer? (See the reading on page 20)
2. What can you learn about Jesus' strategic purpose for the selection of the twelve from 9: 1-6?
3. What power and authority was given to the disciples? What power and authority can we expect from Jesus today?
4. What was Jesus's role with the disciples after their return (9:10)?
5. What questions do these passages raise for you?
6. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.

❖ **Reading: A Biblical Call to Making Disciples (page 20)**

Reading Study Guide

1. What were Jesus' reason for choosing twelve to be with him
 - What can we learn from this about how to bring people to maturity in Christ?
2. How did Paul emulate Jesus' methodology?
3. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians, "I urge to imitate me" (4:16). Can you see yourself saying or living that? Why or why not?
4. What ingredients are necessary for an effective discipling relationship?
5. What questions do you have about the reading?
6. Does the reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Ibid. pp.18-23

My experience of Ogden's tool above depicts that cognitive abilities are emphasized over affective and behavioural dimensions in his approach. In other words, transfer of information and the ability to understand the topics takes a center stage in his approach.

Chapter Five

A Comparison of Discipleship Approaches

In this chapter, I will seek to compare the discipleship approaches of John Wesley and Greg Ogden. In view of the above, sub-topics such as need and context, discipleship format/structure, key elements of their discipleship approaches, and John Wesley and contemporary discipleship will be considered.

5.1 Needs and Context

This study contends that though Wesley and Ogden lived in different contexts (as shown in chapter two), both designed their approaches to address the similar need, that is, the need for Christians who are transformed and empowered by following Christ for the transformation of their societies.

As I noted earlier in this study, Wesley lived in an era where personal piety, holiness of heart and life, and genuine Christian profession was in high demand. Heitzenrater observed that the prevailing conditions showed that every facet of England- both private and public life and institutions were hit by moral decadence and spiritual laxity.¹³⁵ The state of spiritual lethargy and degeneration of the moral fibre of Wesley's era were further deteriorated by the wake of the scientific advancement of the time and its accompanied industrial revolution. These phenomena relegated faith to the back stage of public matters and life in general. As a result, faith, the once final arbiter of all truth and life lost its authority, value and power in the life of the people. It was therefore reduced to a private matter.¹³⁶ This study therefore believes that Wesley felt that something was not going right because the life of the people and himself, as Christians, fell short of what he calls 'Scriptural Christianity.' My reading of Wesley tells me that he believed that the gospels and the life of the Early Church demonstrated that a true Christian is a transformed and empowered person whose life is full of internal and external holiness. And this was the lacking element which has caused the moral break-down and the spiritual laxity of his era. As a result, Wesley designed his discipleship method in order to spread scriptural holiness in England.

¹³⁵ Heitzenrater 1995: 12-13

¹³⁶ Ibid.

On the other hand, the 21st century, according to Ogden, can be said to perpetuate the legacy bequeathed to it by the preceding generation of scientific and industrial revolution. Faith in Christ which produce morality, sanctity of life, absolute truth now has no place in this age.

Ogden, further asserts that the church is swelling up with people while as scriptural holiness and morality are fast shrinking simultaneously. So many people in the church proclaim to be Christians today but very few of them claim to be followers of Jesus.¹³⁷ And as a result of this, the transformation of life that ought to become the life of the Christian for the transformation of the world is no longer experienced in the church. It is therefore in this light that Ogden sought to design his discipleship approach to make disciples of Christ, who will live a life of transformation and empowerment. This study therefore supports the assertion that Wesley and Ogden, though in different contexts, faced similar needs and sought to address them as such.

5.2 Key Elements of Discipleship Approach

Both John Wesley and Greg Ogden agree on the causes of moral break down and spiritual lethargy in our societies. Again, I have observed through the materials interacted that Wesley and Ogden have similar key elements in their respective approaches of discipleship. Here are, therefore, five main elements common to both Wesley and Ogden's approaches, a discipleship approach should invite a few people into a group; a discipleship approach should be designed around the Bible as the main source of a disciple's identity in the triune God; a discipleship approach should be built around transparent relationships; accountability should be a key ingredient of a discipleship approach, and leadership must be a target of a discipleship approach. From the materials I have interacted, I have become convinced that when these five key components are woven together in a discipleship approach, it produces three major outcomes: transformation and empowerment, leadership, and multiplication. And I have come to understand from the gospels that these five elements, among others, and their three major outcomes are pervasive in Jesus' approach of discipleship and that of the early church as found in the New Testament's general discipleship approach.

¹³⁷Ogden, Greg (2007) *Discipleship Essentials: A guide to building Your Life in Christ*. Expanded Edition, Kindle. InterVarsity Press. Downers Grove. pp

5.2.1 Invitation of a Few People into a group

The gospel of Luke records of Jesus resorting to prayer before selecting the twelve disciples from a pool of followers to become apostles.¹³⁸ After this prayer, he chose twelve men from many people who were following him at that time. A discipleship approach must therefore invite few but sincere Christians into a small group of three or four people, with a maximum of twelve people in a group, over a period of time. However, I have observed from Ogden's material that three or four people in a group is the best in attaining the goals of personal discipleship today, because this allows for intimate and trust based relationships to develop.

Membership to Wesley and Ogden's discipleship approaches have invitational elements as well as few memberships in a group. However, Ogden's approach strongly emphasizes prayers before the selection of members,¹³⁹ and highly recommends three to four people in a group, even though, he claims the approach can be applied on various contexts such as "personal study, one-on-one, one-with-two or a discipleship group of ten," over one or one-half hour period, for twenty-five sessions.¹⁴⁰ Wesley, on the other hand, had a hierarchy of interlocking groups, the society meeting, the class meeting and the band meeting. Wesley strategically placed people into separate groups according to readiness of the people.

According to Henderson, Wesley established several means of ascertaining the readiness level of members to warrant an invitation to participate in a group. For instance, class leaders were mandated to provide monthly report on the progress of each member in his or her society, and then each member of the class was interviewed and his or her spiritual conditioned recorded quarterly by the senior minister.¹⁴¹ This enables the readiness of a person to be identified and consequently placed in a group that has the suitable content and method to develop the person. For example, I have observed that for one to be a member of the band, the person must first be a member of a Methodist society, and then after, a careful scrutiny is done on the person to ascertain his or her sincerity and commitment to follow Christ before admittance. A high level of openness is required in the bands and therefore demands that only serious candidates are accepted.

In addition, the strict and candid nature of the band meeting makes it the most effective approach of reaching the human heart for genuine transformation to take shape in the life of the disciple. The invitational approach based on readings of Wesley's discipleship approach

¹³⁸ Luke 6: 12-16

¹³⁹ Ogden. 2007. p.8

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 2007. p.10

¹⁴¹ Henderson

makes transformation possible because the path of progression laid down for individuals through the system encourages commitment in participation of tailored instructional groups for behavioural change. Henderson, again, noted that the point of entry into Wesley's system of discipleship is "behavioural change, followed by affective, aspiration, and rehabilitative functions." He further claimed that for one to become a Methodist, the person begins by "doing what a Methodist does, enabled and enforced by the techniques for behavioural change built into the class meeting mode."¹⁴² In this way, I believe people commit themselves to participate actively in established change processes to bring transformation. In addition, I can say that the entry system works well towards transformation of individuals because higher group levels are made to perfect attitudes, doctrinal comprehension taught in the society meeting, social skills and leadership abilities.

I have also observed that Wesley tried to align his invitational approach based on readiness to Jesus' invitational approach as he chose the twelve from about seventy-two followers (society meeting) to form a small group of apostles (class meeting), and from the apostles he chose the three- inner circle- John, Peter and James (band meeting).¹⁴³ In Wesley's case, the class meeting comprised of a maximum of twelve people, while as the society meeting composed of over fifty members, and the bands were fewer than the class members. With Wesley's approach, every member of the church is catered for, and that encompasses the whole church. Thus, local church discipleship.

In as much as Ogden's approach is useful in making disciples, it has many limitations which I believe Wesley's approach addresses. If the church is indeed charged by Jesus to be the main agent for discipleship, as we read in Matthew 28, then Ogden's approach falls short of using the local church for discipleship. The reason being that I have personally experienced that one major limitation of Ogden's approach is that it has only a weak or no co-ordination, and link between the church and the small groups, in terms of content, schedule and life of the church (again, taking the church as the main agent of discipleship). The approach invites few people into a small group but the content and activities of this small group is not streamlined with the life of the church. The small group has a complete content and life of its own different from what goes on in the church. This situation has a tendency of over working the members because the church bombard them with certain lessons while the small group meeting also treats a different lesson or theme, making continuity and consistency a problem for the

¹⁴² Henderson. 1997. Loc.2317

¹⁴³ Bible

members. In addition, this situation may produce lack of commitment and enthusiasm on the part of members from both sides because following the schedule and activities of the church, and, at the same time, that of the small group may become difficult for them and their families. However, Ogden's approach may serve well in a place where there is no church, or one is motivated to do one on one discipleship.

2.2 The Bible as a Key Source of Disciple's Identity

A Discipleship Approach is built around the Bible as the source of a disciple's identity in the Triune God.

Jesus declared to his followers in Matthew 28:18-20, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all the things I have commanded you." By the command of Jesus above, Dietrich Schindler claims that Jesus expects the church to make disciples by immersing them into "the reality of the Triune God"¹⁴⁴ as scripture teaches. The new reliable reality of the new convert therefore is that he or she now is a child of God, whose identity now is found in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Due to this reason, Schindler believes that a discipleship approach should use scripture as the principal reference for all knowledge, experience, authority and rationality.¹⁴⁵ The discipleship approach should therefore make scripture as the source of identity of God that needs to be embraced by all the members of the group.

Furthermore, Schindler, contends that the second significant thing Jesus expects us to do in order to make disciples is to help people to obey the teachings of Jesus and apply them in their lives.¹⁴⁶ Jesus' teachings and its applications are the goal of the scripture, and a discipleship approach must therefore make scripture a cardinal focus. Schindler, again, observed that real teaching actually takes place when people understand what Jesus said and apply it into their lives.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, "teaching without application is meaningless", according to Schindler. Therefore, the goal of a discipleship approach is the transformation of people not the transfer of information.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴Schindler, Gerhard, Dietrich (2013) *The Jesus Model: Planting Churches the Jesus Way*. Piquant Editions. UK. pp.126

¹⁴⁵ Ibid

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 2013

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 2013

In view of the above reasons, this paper contends that any discipleship approach must be built around the Bible in order to immerse members into the identity of the Triune God and it should also guide members to apply their new identities daily. Wesley, as I have already noted in chapter three and elsewhere in this thesis, became a student of the Bible himself, and then sought to teach and preach it for the people to employ it in their life. As a result, Wesley's Society meeting became the main platform where Biblical expositions and teachings were done. To this end, one can contend that Wesley used the Bible to argue for a life of holiness as the end of religion, and in this case, the goal of discipleship, as he sought to spread 'scriptural holiness' in Britain. Ogden's materials paint a clear picture to me that he perceives the Bible as a cardinal point in a disciple's life and living. With this understanding, Ogden therefore goes ahead to structure his discipleship material on biblical themes such as grace, forgiveness, and sin, just to mention but a few. He further makes the bible core beliefs for all disciples.

I think Wesley's discipleship approach applies the above principle in a unique manner. The main instructional platform of the approach was the Society meetings. This platform provides participants with well-prepared talk, preaching and exposition of Biblical material. Then in the class meetings, members are practically guided to allow the truth above to alter their behaviour by applying them in their daily lives.

In addition to the above, the bands present a significant environment to further perfect their affections by guiding participants to reflect the life of the Triune God, as scripture teaches. I believe that the above arrangement by Wesley allowed him to separate cognitive, affective, and behavioural functions for easy, efficient and effective monitoring, so that members will be helped to internalized and practice the truth of the Bible.¹⁴⁹ These three meetings of Wesley's approach facilitated transformation of disciples of Jesus.

Ogden's approach, on the other hand, combines immersion and application together in each meeting and lesson. Ogden structured his discipleship model in such a way that teaching and application takes place in each session conducted, and at the same time. Moreover, Ogden's approach is thematically organized and makes it easy to follow. However, since Ogden's approach is designed to present cognitive, affective and behavioural learning in one section at the same time, it makes it difficult to supervise the attainment of each learning domain. My observation has shown that the design of the lesson, especially the questions, seems to favour the cognitive functions over affective, and behaviour functions of the lesson. I have

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

practically observed that cognitive interest dominates the session of Ogden's approach. I observed this when my church tried to use Ogden's materials for discipleship.

Moreover, both Wesley and Ogden's approaches make use of instrumental group learning activities such as prepared questionnaire to guide the group through certain processes, in order to achieve the desired goal of the session or meeting. A closer analysis of the main questions prepared by Wesley and Ogden's approaches reveal that Ogden's questionnaire tend to be more general while Wesley's were specific and target oriented. From the above views, this study contends that Wesley's instrumental group activities are directed specifically to the root of issues at stake in order to provide lasting positive effect on members. Examples of the above assertions can be seen from the questionnaire of the class and the band meetings in chapter three, as presented above, for Wesley and a sample of Ogden's session on 'Making Disciples,' also in chapter three of this study.

5.2.3 Transparent Relationships

One can contend that by Jesus commanding the church to immerse its members into the identity of the Triune God in Matthew 28, he emphasises the significance of relationship as an indispensable element of making disciples. In the sense that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit lives in a perfect love relationship with one another that must serve as a model for us because we are made after the image of the Triune God. It is with this respect, I believe, that Jesus chose few people to cultivate an intimate relationship of love and trust, as a model for the church. I have also observed that the early Church and Paul modelled Jesus' method of discipleship by intentionally creating intimate relationship based on trust and love with few people.

I think relationship of trust enables members to be comfortable to open up and expose themselves to each other about their fears, failures and weakness in applying the truth or teachings of Christ in their lives. This then becomes a congenial environment for the Holy Spirit to build the character of Christ in members. Thus, small group meeting becomes an environment where people can practice their new identity in Christ together.

Wesley's class and band meetings were structured to facilitate the cultivation of intimate relationships based on trust and love. The class meetings in particular, served to allow members to be each other's keeper, where acts of mercy were undertaken to care for the unfortunate members of the society. A relationship of love therefore, becomes a focal part of the class meeting. The band meeting presents an additional opportunity for trust to function to

allow members to speak the truth in love, and to be highly vulnerable, in order to receive guidance and encouragement as members strive to apply the teachings of Christ. My impression therefore, is that Wesley's approach of discipleship was practically an experientially oriented enterprise, where trust and love are practiced to serve as a base on which all other virtues are built. The nature of the questions presented by the band meeting targets nothing but the heart of the disciple with respect to the truth of the gospel, and the only choice offered to participants was honest and sincere respond of the state of affairs of their heart, widely opened to fellow struggling friends.

Transparent relationship is observed to be one of the main pillars on which Ogden's discipleship approach is built. Ogden structured his approach to build trust because he believes that transformation takes place in the context of transparent relationship which create an enabling atmosphere for members to grapple with the truth of God. For instance, Ogden's discipleship essentials ask questions concerning the core truth, memory verse study guide, and inductive study guide as "what questions or issues does the core truth raise for you? How have these verses spoken to you this week?" And "what questions do these passages raise for you?"¹⁵⁰ respectively. I have noted that these questions enable the disciple to risk self-revelation and confess to fellow disciples in the group. However, Wesley's class and band meeting's questions and structure breed more trust and love than Ogden's because they are direct and specific in nature

5.2.4. Accountability

My reading of the Gospels reveal that Jesus made sure that he actually practiced what he preached. This became clear when he called the twelve and lived with them. The disciples witnessed the connection between his word and deeds. He again, sent the seventy-two two by two (Luke 10:1-23) signifying the need for mutual accountability (among other reasons) in a trust based relationship. An accountable relationship therefore allows one to speak the truth in love to one another, and in order to be each other's keeper. In this way, I can say that accountability therefore grants authority to another person to hold you accountable to the commitment made to one another. A common Ghanaian adage summarizes the above notion that in creating a path, the one leading does not know that the path he or she is creating is crooked because it takes the follower of the leader to draw his or her attention that he/she

¹⁵⁰ Ogden. 2007. pp.17-19.

needs to come back to straighten the path he/she has made. In effect, growth and transformation thrives well in a mutual accountable relationship.

I have observed that both Wesley and Ogden's approaches emphasizes mutual accountability as central part to produce transformation and growth. As a result of this, Ogden asserted that accountable relationship is the third pillar on which his discipleship approach is built. To this end, he designed The Disciple's Covenant that stipulates the standards of the discipleship relationship and demands the disciple to commit to it by signing the covenant before the discipleship process begins. In as much as Wesley's model of discipleship, like that of Ogden, required members to agree to certain standards before admittance, my impression is that Wesley's band meetings, as described in chapter three above, was direct and specific in targeting the heart of members to pave way for transformation to take root and shape of people involved.

5.2.5 Leadership

Leadership, according to Walter C. Wright Jr., "is a relationship in which one person seeks to influence the thoughts, behaviours, beliefs, or values of another person."¹⁵¹ I think this definition may best describe Jesus' understanding of leadership, and thus, his leadership style with regards to the training of the twelve. A close reading of the four Gospels reveals a sequence of how Jesus entered relationship with the twelve, in order to influence them to become world changers. According to A. B. Bruce, in *The Training of the Twelve*, there was a period of examination, where Jesus invited the first disciples to "come and see" as recorded in John 1:39. There was also a period of "follow me" as we read in Mark 1:17. Lastly, the period where he chose the twelve to become apostles,¹⁵² as found in Luke 6: 12-13.

From the above, Jesus built relationships that enabled him to select few people and to impact their lives to share his vision and mission. I can say that he transformed them by influencing their thoughts, beliefs, values, or attitudes so that they may live like he did, behave like he did and work like he did. And by so doing, his work on earth continues after his ascension. In this way, discipleship becomes a mentoring encounter where leaders are trained to lead others.

I have observed that John Wesley believed in the priesthood of all believers, even though he had faith in a professional clergyman as well. However, Wesley believed that every member

¹⁵¹ Wright, C., Walter, Jr., (2009) *Relational Leadership: A Biblical Model for Influence and Service*. Paternoster Publishing. U.S.A. Loc. 170

¹⁵² Bruce, A., B., (2010) *The Training of the Twelve*. Christian Classics Ethereal Library. 1.1 Edition. Loc. 285-304

of a congregation has a function to undertake to build up the church to encourage grow into maturity in Christ. I think this conviction probably caused Wesley to design his discipleship structure to ensure that every Methodist engages actively in the life of the Methodist groups. For this to be functional and practical, his design made provision for several official positions in the Methodist groups. I have noted elsewhere in this research that some of these positions were class leaders, trustees, band leaders, preachers, stewards, sick-visitors and helpers. However, these leaders were not to perform the duties of ministry alone but they were tasked to train and equip leaders at the lower level so that collectively, the work of ministry will be done.

As I have noted above, Wesley's society meeting is created to influence the mind of the disciple to take on the mind of Christ, while the class and band meetings were designed to reach the heart of a person in order to influence the heart for new characters and attitudes to form so that the person takes on the image of Christ. This will therefore enable the disciple to try to live like Jesus did, behave like he did and work like Jesus did to perpetuate the work of Christ on earth. In light of the above, I can therefore say that the whole discipleship structure of Wesley was designed not only to disciple people to follow Jesus, but to produce leaders who will intend train others to do the work of Christ.

I have also observed above that Ogden's discipleship approach targets leadership as one of the end product of discipleship. And so, he asserted in his book *Discipleship Essentials* that when a follower of Christ becomes matured by virtue of intimate, accountable relationships built around the word of God, the disciple will be able to self-initiate and reproduce.¹⁵³ As a result of this idea, Ogden's approach encourages a rotation of the leading of the sessions among the participants, at a certain stage of the discipleship programme. Again, the participant signs a contract to disciple at least two other people following the initial completion of the *Discipleship Essentials*.¹⁵⁴

However, Wesley's approach goes deeper than Ogden's approach because Wesley targets not only discipling others to follow Christ and who will intend make others follow Christ, but he also seeks to produce faithful leaders who will lead various sectors of the church and life in general. For example, Wesley's approach makes room for the development of faithful church administrators and local preachers as well.

¹⁵³ Ogden. 2007. Loc. 106

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. Loc. 229

5.3 John Wesley and Contemporary Discipleship

I have already demonstrated in chapter two of this study that Wesley lived in the 18th century Britain, where his discipleship approach became necessary due to the prevailing personal, cultural, social, and historical conditions. I therefore contend that though Wesley's discipleship method was designed and practiced in a context different from the 21st century's context, it can still be applied today, of course with some few modifications. This research supports the above contention with the following three observations.

Firstly, this study believes that though Wesley and Ogden lived in different contexts, they faced similar needs, and tried to address them in their own ways. This therefore, means that the needs Wesley sought to address through his discipleship approach prevails today in many different forms. For instance, moral decadence is on the ascendency today perhaps due to the advent of internet and advancement in technology and media. There is also lack of commitment, and apathy towards the church and its work as demonstrated by the 20/80 research in USA, and another research shows that many people claim to be Christians today but are not disciples of Jesus.¹⁵⁵

Secondly, this study observed that Wesley and Ogden's discipleship approaches focused on five elements to produce transformed disciples, who are empowered as disciple makers, in order to produce multiplication of disciples of Christ. These five elements have been discussed above and they are as follows: A discipleship approach should invite few people into groups; a disciple approach should be built around the word of God; a discipleship approach should also be built around transparent relationships; accountability should be a major part of a discipleship approach, and leadership should be a target of a discipleship approach. Since these aforementioned elements formed the major elements of Wesley's discipleship approach, and Ogden's approach, this research contends that Wesley's approach will be useful in contemporary approach of making disciples. Again, the effectiveness of Wesley's design even makes it a more suitable approach than Ogden's as I have noted in chapters four and five of this research.

Lastly, I have observed that Wesley's discipleship approach is suitable for one-on-one, small group and whole church discipleship, but I believe it is very effective and easy to use in a context of whole church discipleship. In this wise, I believe that Wesley's approach embraces and makes use of the community approach to discipleship. Wesley recognized that

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

discipleship takes place suitably in the context of community, thus, his 3-level discipleship approach- Society, Class and Band meetings.

Wesley's approach was efficient and effective in making disciples in his time and I think with a few modifications, it will be effective and efficient in our time too. In contemporary fast-moving world, approaches that make good use of time to achieve maximum outcomes remains the preferred choice. Discipleship of the local church tends to be a difficult venture in our churches. It is very difficult to streamline all the activities of the church in a harmonious way. But John Wesley's approach is well suited to do this job. This is true in the sense that each of his 3-level approaches has focused targets of discipleship in its operation. For instance, the Society meeting, as observed in chapter four, has a primary motif for instructing (teaching) members the essential truths of the Christian culture (mostly of cognitive dimensions of instructions)

About 50 people participate in this meeting and this therefore required the use of lecture, preaching, hymn singing, public reading, and exhortation methods in delivering message to the congregation. I have also observed that the teachings of the society meeting became the central operational tool for other meetings.

Again, the content of the Society meeting becomes the guiding principle and material for the two other group meetings. So that the target each of them is created to achieve will receive full concentration for maximum output. Most contemporary discipleship approaches I have encountered have all been designed to operate outside the church or independently from the focus of the church. And this burdens the members as they may have to belong to two or more different group meetings with different agendas in the church and outside the church. This trend tends to discourage people from partaking in discipleship meetings. Wesley's approach, however, has the sermon and teachings of the Society meeting forming the basis or background for the operation of the Class and Band meetings. It therefore makes discipleship the focus of the entire church, and actively engages all members at all the levels.

Contemporary discipleship approaches tend to achieve all the three domains of education at the same time in one lesson. This makes it difficult to concentrate on each of the domains as time is limited. Wesley's approach attends to each domain on different levels of the approaches, and this makes it easy, efficient and effective to run and participate.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

In the preceding study, I have attempted to compare John Wesley's discipleship approach in the 18th century Britain to Greg Ogden's discipleship approach of today. I was able to undertake above study by considering the following sub-questions What is John Wesley's theology of discipleship? What is Greg Ogden's theology of discipleship? What is John Wesley's discipleship approach? What is Greg Ogden's discipleship approach? This conclusion will also summarize the main point of the comparison of Discipleship Approach of John Wesley and that of Greg Ogden.

In order to be able to draw the conclusion of this research, I will hereby provide a summary of the chapters presented above. In light of this, the thesis in chapter one dealt with the background of the thesis, where items such as the thesis question, objectives of the thesis, research methods and materials to be used for the thesis as well as the structure of the thesis were presented. This chapter also revealed that this thesis came to light as my personal interest concerning discipleship met my academic interest of Wesley's discipleship approach.

Again, since John Wesley and Greg Ogden's biography and context remain vital in understanding their discipleship approaches, chapter two dealt with Wesley and Ogden's biography and contexts. Furthermore, chapter three shed light on New Testament theology of discipleship and went ahead to present Wesley and Ogden's theology of discipleship.

In chapter four, the thesis presented disciple approaches of both John Wesley and Greg Ogden. Where, this thesis identified that Wesley used a 3-level small groups in his discipleship approach. Ogden on the other hand, designed a tool for small group gathering in his discipleship approach.

The thesis, in chapter five, then considered a comparison of John Wesley's discipleship approach to Greg Ogden's approach. And it came to light in this chapter that both Wesley and Ogden used five similar key elements in their discipleship approaches.

6.1 What is John Wesley's theology of discipleship?

I have been able to give account of John Wesley's theology of discipleship in this study that before his Aldersgate encounter, he became convinced that the Christian life is a complete devotion or dedication and consecration to the will of God. So that for one to be a proper

christian, he or she has to do all that it takes to conform to the will of God. This understanding caused him to live in a state of constant fear of God, perceiving God as a superior being that demanded conformity to his will in compulsion. He also understood that the life of a christian must produce holiness as a true expression of the christian life. This caused him to resort to rules and resolutions, as a way of conquering sin in his life. However, His rules could not secure him victory over sin.

Then as Wesley nears his Aldersgate experience, his notion of a disciple or a christian become reshaped. So that a true Christian is one that follows Christ such that the person's entire inward and outward life conforms to the life of Christ. And this becomes possible only when one first repents and believes in Christ through faith and by faith in Christ alone, in order to receive the free gift of God's grace of regeneration which God offers instantly.

Then at Aldersgate, Wesley pointed out his experience that I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my sins*, even *mine*, and *saved me* from the law of sin and death."¹⁵⁶ Wesley, therefor, noted that the Aldersgate experience gave him victory over the power of sin and there he experienced the assurance of salvation that has eluded him for so long a time. Here, Wesley felt he has been regenerated and was born again. His understanding of a christian will then become a person who repents and believes in Christ and receives the Holy Spirit provided by the grace of God such that the person is assured of salvation and has victory over the power of sin. Wesley, therefore, asserts that the marks of this new birth are faith, hope and love.

In short, I asserted that Wesley grounded discipleship on the grace of God, the power of the Holy Spirit and the finished work of Christ on the cross. Such that only by faith that one is able to believe in Christ, follow him and become like him in deed, action, word and work. And by the grace of God, the power of the Holy Spirit and on the merit of Christ, the christian will live a life of transformation-holiness.

6.2 What is Greg Ogden's theology of discipleship?

In this study, I have been able to present Greg Ogden's theology of discipleship that a disciple is the person, who in the context of community, subjects himself or herself under the shaping influence of Jesus such that Jesus is vividly observed to be the deployer of the transformative power.¹⁵⁷ Ogden believes that a disciple is the same as a christian because the book of Acts

¹⁵⁶ Word and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*. 18:249-50

¹⁵⁷Ibid. 2003. pp.27-28, 37, 46

(11: 26) referred to such understanding. And in view of this, he contends that a Christian is an apprentice of Jesus who acknowledges Jesus as his or her Lord, discipler, teacher and trainer.¹⁵⁸ Such that in “every area of the person’s interior life, personal relationships or social involvement,” he/she will “seek to know and live the mind and will of God.” In the end, a disciple of Jesus becomes “the one who is self-initiating, reproducing and fully devoted to him.”¹⁵⁹ My reading of Ogden, therefor, perceives him to ground discipleship on commitment, obedience and allegiance to Christ and the will of God, so that the disciple will live a life of devotion to Christ and the will of God, and engages in the mission of God.

6.3 What is John Wesley’s discipleship approach?

I have discussed in this study that John Wesley’s main discipleship approach was the use of society meeting, band meeting and class meeting.

Wesley stated the purpose of the society meetings as “a company of men having the form, and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.”¹⁶⁰ Here, we observed that Wesley realized that the Christian enterprise is well lived and practiced in a community of believers.

The primary motif for the Methodist societies can be said to be that of instructing (teaching) the people essential truths of the Christian culture (mostly of cognitive dimensions of instructions), as one infers from the purpose Wesley provided above. The physical arrangement of this meeting was about fifty audience or more. This therefore required the use of lecture, preaching, hymn singing, public reading, and exhortation methods in delivering message to the congregation. I have also observed that the teachings of the society meeting became the central operational tool for the other meetings.

The second level within Wesley’s approach was the Class meetings. Wesley contended that the chief purpose of the class meeting was to discern whether members of the Methodist Society “are indeed working out their own salvation.”¹⁶¹ And to be able to help members to continue to live and do life as born-again Christians. In view of this, Wesley outlined three main characteristics that must guide the life of the disciple as they partake in the class meetings. These characteristics remain the fruits of Christian salvation, according to Wesley.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. p.47

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 2003. pp.27-28, 37, 46

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 1989. p.69

¹⁶¹ Davies. Vol. 9. 1989

Firstly, do no harm, “by avoiding evil in every kind.” Secondly, do good, “by being in every kind merciful after their powers, as they have opportunity doing good of every possible sort and as far as is possible to all men.” Finally, attend upon all the ordinances of God.¹⁶²This made the class meeting a platform for behavioural change.

The class meeting made up of mixed genders of heterogeneous in age, spiritual readiness and social status. It also served as an entry point for most of the converts who will be initiated into becoming Methodist.

The last level one partakes in Wesley’s discipleship approach was the band meeting, which aimed at “affective redirection.”¹⁶³ Wesley formed the bands for the most serious members of the society in order for a more intimate fellowship with each other. This band was a small group gender, age, and marital status based gathering that met three times per week. It was a voluntary group of people showing a vivid Christian commitment and a particular interest to “grow in love, holiness and purity of intentions.” The aim was to reach the heart of the members such that their emotions, attitudes, feelings, affections and intentions would be improved.¹⁶⁴ And so, at the start of the band meeting, Wesley begun by saying to the members “the design of our meeting is to obey that command, Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed.”¹⁶⁵

I have noted that as the band meeting is in session, a member may be asked these following questions, among others

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptations have you met with?
3. How was you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?
5. Have you nothing you desire to keep secret?¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Davies. Vol. 9. 1989, pp.71-73

¹⁶³ Henderson, D., Michael (1997) John Wesley’s Class Meeting: A model for making Disciples. Evangel Publishing House. U.S.A. Loc.1788

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 1997. Loc.1788

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 1989. pp.77-78

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

6.4 What is Greg Ogden's discipleship approach?

In this study, I have attempted to present that Greg Ogden believes that the primary and most productive “way to grow into self-initiating, reproducing, fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ are by being involved in highly accountable, relational, multiplying discipleship unit of three or four.”¹⁶⁷ The reason being that a safe small group setting, according to Ogden, provides a platform for members to learn to be intimate, open or self-revealing. So that the Holy Spirit will enforce his transformative power by the use of God's truth to shape and transform us into the image of Christ, as we reveal our vulnerability and confess to one another (quote)

In view of this, Ogden created a practical guide, tool or book called *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ*. This book has four parts, part one deals with the basic that a follower of Jesus needs to practice as spiritual disciplines. Part two deals with how the basics in part one is comprehended as core biblical or theological truth. Then, part three deals with how the core truth comes to form the character and life-style of the disciple. And part four talks about what a disciple does in order to engage the church and the world.¹⁶⁸ Ogden contends that this tool produces three elements necessary for the creation of a conducive climate for the Holy Spirit to initiate accelerated growth in the disciple of Jesus. The first element, according to Ogden, is “the unchanging truth of God's Word.” The second element is “transparent relationship.” The last element is “mutual accountability.”¹⁶⁹

6.5 A comparison of Discipleship Approach of John Wesley and that of Greg Ogden

This is the main research question a comparison of discipleship approach of John Wesley and that of Greg Ogden. This study, therefore, contends that though Wesley and Ogden lived in different contexts (as shown in chapter two), both designed their approaches to address similar need, that is, the need for Christians who are transformed and empowered by following Christ for the transformation of their societies. So, Wesley designed his discipleship approach in order to spread scriptural holiness in England because every area of England at that time was hit by moral break-down and spiritual laxity. Ogden, on the other hand, believes that faith in Christ no longer seem to produce morality, sanctity of life, and absolute truth in today's age. Thus, the assertion that the church is swelling up with people while as scriptural

¹⁶⁷ Ogden, Greg (2003) *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*. Kindle Edition. InterVarsity Press. Downers Grove. pp.54-55

¹⁶⁸ Ogden, Greg (2007) *Discipleship Essentials: A guide to building Your Life in Christ*. Expanded Edition, Kindle. InterVarsity Press. Downers Grove. pp.7-10

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 2007

holiness and morality are fast shrinking simultaneously.¹⁷⁰ He therefore designed his discipleship approach to make disciples of Christ, who will live a life of transformation, empowerment to effect change in their societies.

Additionally, this study contends that Wesley and Ogden's discipleship approaches have five key elements. These are a discipleship approach should invite a few people into a group; a discipleship approach should be designed around scripture as the main source of a disciple's identity in the triune God; a discipleship approach should be built around transparent relationships; accountability should be a key ingredient of a discipleship approach, and leadership must be a target of a discipleship approach.

I have argued that in as much as Ogden's approach is useful in making disciples, it has many limitations which I believe Wesley's approach addresses. If the church is charged by Jesus to be the main agent for discipleship, as we read in Matthew 28, I have personally experienced that one major limitation of Ogden's approach is that it has a weak, or no co-ordination, and link between the church and small groups, in terms of content, schedule and life of the church (taking the church as the main agent of discipleship). Ogden's approach invites few people into a small group but the content and activities of this small group is not streamlined with the life of the church. The small group has a complete content and life of its own different from what goes on in the church. This situation has a tendency of over working the members because the church bombard them with certain lessons while the small group meeting also treats a different lesson or theme, making continuity and consistency a problem for the members.

In addition, this situation may produce lack of commitment and enthusiasm on the part of members from both sides because following the schedule and activities of the church, and, at the same time, that of the small group may become difficult for them and their families. However, Ogden's approach may serve well in a place where there is no church, or one is motivated to do one on one discipleship.

Again, I have found out that Wesley's approach helps to internalize the teachings of Jesus, so as to build one's life in and on the Triune God. This came to light as a results of Wesley's 3 level discipleship approach that allowed him to separate cognitive, affective, and behavioural functions for easy, efficient and effective monitoring, so that members will be helped to

¹⁷⁰ Ogden, Greg (2007) *Discipleship Essentials: A guide to building Your Life in Christ*. Expanded Edition, Kindle. InterVarsity Press. Downers Grove.

internalized and practice the truth of the Bible.¹⁷¹ These three meetings of Wesley's approach facilitated transformation of disciples of Jesus.

Ogden's approach, on the other hand, is designed to present cognitive, affective and behavioural learning in one session at the same time, it makes it difficult to supervise the attainment of each learning domain. The design of the lesson, especially the questions, seems to favour the cognitive functions over affective, and behaviour functions in each lesson. I have practically observed that cognitive interest dominates the session of Ogden's approach, especially, when the members in the group are more than four.

I have also pointed out in this study that both Wesley and Ogden centered their disciple approaches on relationship of trust and love. The study, however, recognized that Wesley's class and band meeting's questions and structure breed and facilitate the build of trust and love more than Ogden's because they (class and band) admit only people who are ready and seriously seek for maturity, and are willing to be intimate to one another. Moreover, the direct and specific nature of class and band meetings questionnaire functions deeply on trust and love.

In addition, I have discussed in this research that both Wesley and Ogden's approaches emphasize mutual accountability, but Wesley's approach achieves this aim better than Ogden's. I have discovered that Wesley's class meeting's guiding principle of "do no harm, do good, attend upon all the ordinances of God"¹⁷² form a valuable motivation for speaking in love and being each other's keeper. It also prompted the design of the strict and specific nature of the deep probing questions into members lives.

Lastly, both Wesley and Ogden viewed and targeted leadership as one of the major aim of discipleship. However, Wesley's approach goes deeper and achieves this target better than Ogden's approach because Wesley targets not only discipling others to follow Christ, and who will intend make others follow Christ, but he also seeks to produce faithful leaders who will lead various sectors of the church and life in general. I have noted that Wesley's society meeting is created to influence the mind of the disciple to take on the mind of Christ, while the class and band meetings are designed to reach the heart of a person in order to influence them for new characters and attitudes to form, so that the person takes on the image of Christ.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Davies. Vol. 9. 1989, pp.71-73

This will therefore enable the disciple to try to live like Jesus did, behave like he did and work like Jesus did to perpetuate the work of Christ on earth.

In light of the above, I can therefore say that the whole discipleship structure of Wesley was designed not only to disciple people to follow Jesus, but to produce leaders who will intend train others to do the work of Christ. This study therefore concludes that though Wesley's discipleship approach tends to offer better approach, Ogden's discipleship approach equally, helps to disciple people for Christ. And in spite of their different contexts, a comparison of John Wesley's discipleship approach to Greg Ogden's discipleship approach is still valid today.

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